Pipes AND TOBACCOS

Fall 2005

COVER STORY
The Savinelli Autograph pipe

Tobacco Processing: Planta Tabac

The origin of the Blowfish shape

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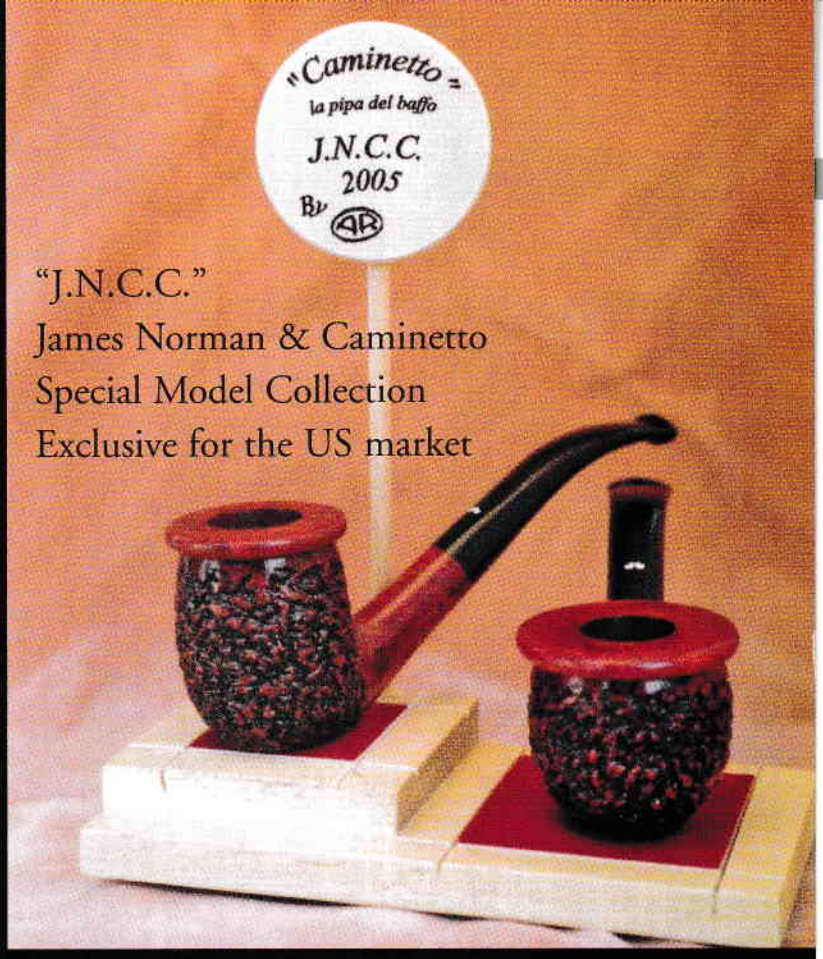

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Pipes AND TOBACCOS

Page 34

14 **Awesome Autographs**
Savinelli offers something for everybody—premium cigars, beautiful lighters and pipes that are accessible for all budgets—but the company's top of the line is its high-grade Autograph pipes. Using only the best aged briar, Savinelli entrusts just three of its most skilled pipemakers to carve its Autographs, ensuring the pipes' beauty and quality engineering.

18 **About the Space-Age *the pipe***
Made from pyrolytic graphite—the same material used in rocket nozzles and plumbing for nuclear power plants—*the pipe* promised a cooler, drier, less hazardous smoke. Produced in the 1960s and 1970s, *the pipe* did not develop a big following among more traditional briar and meerschaum pipe smokers, yet *the pipe* pipes continue to surface at pipe shows and have developed a dedicated group of enthusiasts.

24 **Gateway to Excellence**
Founded in 1956 as a processing facility for filler tobaccos for cigars, Planta Tabak's first pipe tobacco blend was made from scraps from the cigar tobacco. Like the city it calls home, Planta has come a long way in nearly 50 years, and it now produces high-quality tobaccos—such as Holger Danske and Presbyterian—that satisfy a wide range of smokers' tastes.

28 **A Spring Runs Through It**
Roanoke, Virginia's Milan Tobacconist is an old-fashioned tobacco shop that is closing in on its 100th anniversary. Milan Tobacconist keeps tradition alive by producing its own tobacco blends in its own tobacco cellar, which is naturally humidified thanks to an underground spring that cuts its way through the floor.

34 **The Strange Tale of the Blowfish**
The influence of Danish-inspired pipe shapes is widely recognized, and few shapes are held in higher esteem than the blowfish. Pipes described as blowfish are regularly seen in magazines and pipe catalogs and on Web and auction sites, yet the pipemakers most identified with these designs are themselves uncertain what customers mean when they request a blowfish.

40 **Disney Pipe Collection**
Remember when you could smoke in public? When you could go to a restaurant or walk through a shopping mall smoking your pipe? Most of us even remember when the Disney theme parks had tobacco shops. Smoking is no longer permitted in Disney theme parks, except for designated outside areas, but some of the pipes and tobaccos of the Disney smoking era still survive in a unique collection.

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Fall 2005

Photo by Samuels Peck and Darius Perkins

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44 **Helena (Lena) Sophia "Jungfru" Isberg**
Idolized by some of her countrymen, lionized by others as one of the finest 19th-century Swedish artisans, Helena Sophia Isberg is known in the United States to less than a handful of pipe collectors. Investing hundreds of hours in each of her works, Isberg's finished birch and maple pipes display the beauty and dexterity of her carving as well as a talent for detail.

48 **Richard Laymon**
Richard Laymon authored more than 30 novels and 60 short stories during a career that was cut short by his untimely death in 2001 at the age of 54. Two of his novels and a collection of his short stories were nominated for the Horror Writers' Association's Bram Stoker Award. Before earning fame as a noted horror novelist, Laymon published *Smokers' Blend*, a short-lived pipe magazine.

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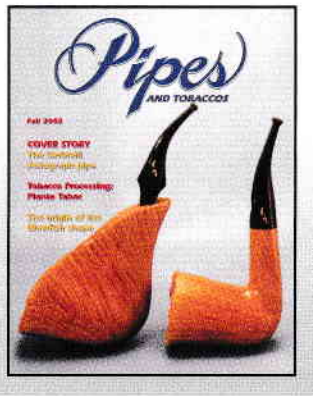

Cover: Two outstanding examples of Savinelli's Autographs, the left graded 000, the right, 00. *(Photo by Chuck Stanion)*

Pipes AND TOBACCOS

A quarterly magazine celebrating pipes of all kinds and fine tobaccos.

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RTDA in New Orleans

The RTDA (Retail Tobacco Dealers of America) Trade Show was held in early August in New Orleans this year. New Orleans is under water as I write this, and its people—those who survived Katrina—are peering from a chasm of desperation at an impossibly daunting climb toward some remote hope of normalcy. New Orleans, though, possesses a unique culture and spirit, and as horrific as things look now, it's impossible that the city won't eventually be back, and with even more irrepressible personality than before.

It's difficult to reconcile the washed-out, muck-filled streets whose images are now being broadcast on the news with the same streets that I (and thousands of other RTDA folks) was walking just three weeks ago. I'm glad to have been there so recently but also relieved that I was already gone when the catastrophe occurred, and that I am not there now in the midst of the chaos and suffering that so many people are at this moment enduring. *P&T*, like so many others, has made a donation to the Red Cross in support of the people of New Orleans and everyone else emerging from the storm's path—people who have lost so much, who are now without basic necessities, without homes, perhaps without family and friends, perhaps without hope.

But three weeks ago, the city was its old self, gritty and neon bright, smelling of seafood and revelry, pulsing with reggae and blues and jazz and vibrant with raw energy and rollicking fellowship. Sparkling beads strobed through the night air over Bourbon Street, and beer-splashed shoes by the thousands bustled past street barkers enticing passersby with promises of fabulous music, rivers of alcohol, heartbreakingly beautiful women and no cover charge.

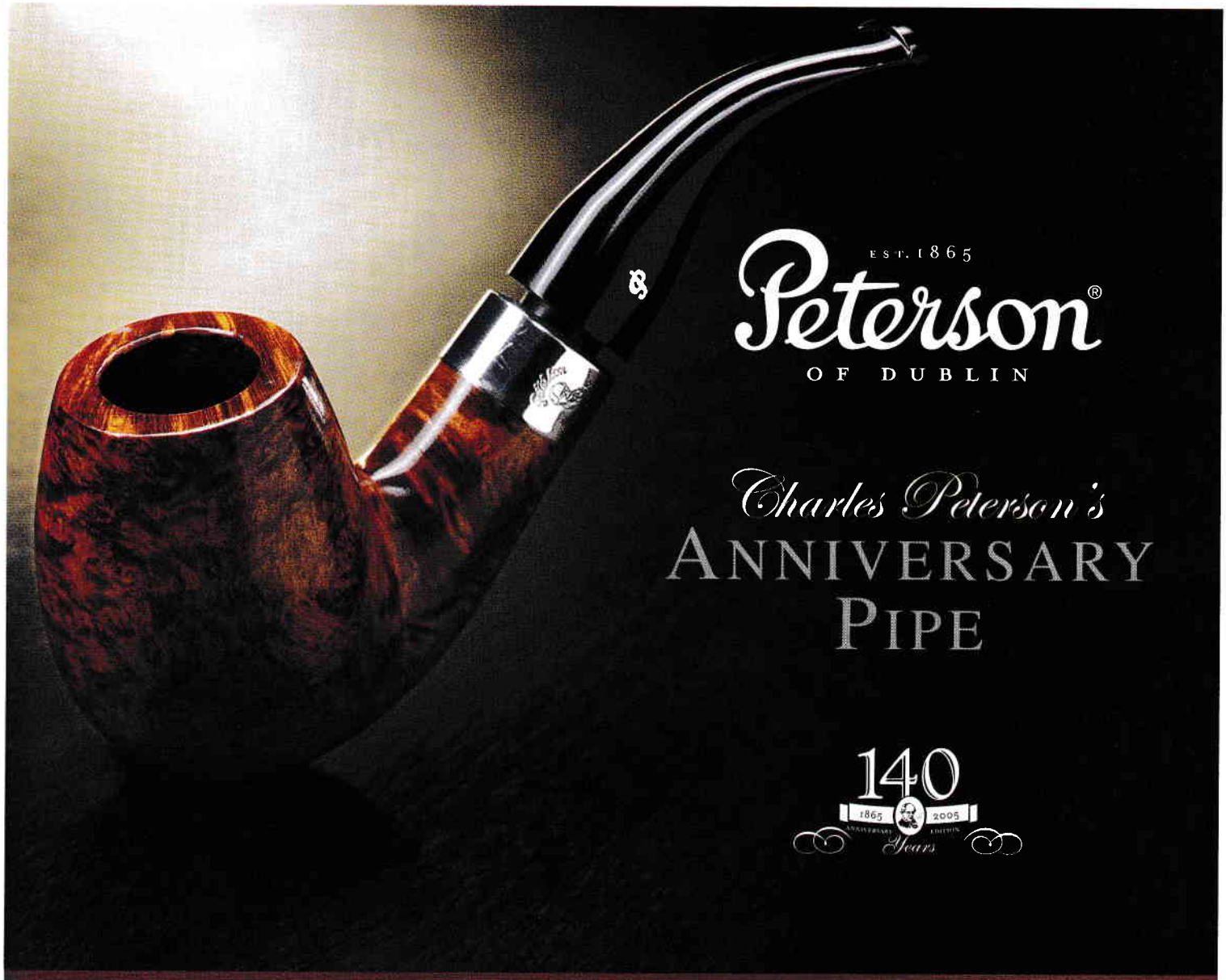
It was a terrific place for the RTDA. For those unfamiliar with it, the annual RTDA Trade Show is where tobacco retailers purchase new items and restock old for their shops. Everything you've ever seen at a tobacconist is at the show. Where you see a dozen Ardors or Radices or Dunhills or Ferndowns under glass in your local shop, know that they were lovingly chosen from among tens of thousands of pipes available at the trade show. Those shelves of tobacco from which you select your Stokkebye or McClelland or Solani tins were chosen from a hypnotizing multitude of tobaccos at the show. Cigars, lighters and every accessory imaginable are all at the show.

Your tobacconist invests a great deal of time, expense and effort to sift through a myriad of new products, to promote relationships with manufacturers of hard-to-get popular items, to become more educated in the industry and therefore become better able to prophesy what we consumers might want.

It's hard work, but there is fun as well. Great people, excellent conversation, parties, the sharing of business strategies and news. It's enormously satisfying just to be there, to speak with the most informed people in the industry, to see so many fabulous products. And pipes—the most stunning selection of pipes of every make receding into the distance in every direction. I overheard part of a conversation as I walked through the convention center on the first day of the show. A gentleman was speaking into his cell phone, trying to convey his awe: "Billy," he said, "I'm in tobacco heaven." So the show has its high points. And who wouldn't have fun in a place like New Orleans at its peak?

That's where this year's products were selected. The pipes, the lighters, the tampers you buy now were not long ago in the city of New Orleans, as it was and has been for so long. Perhaps, after the city is rebuilt, you'll have the opportunity to take that new pipe back to the place where it was chosen, and together you can walk the restored streets. I hope so. There's no experience quite like puffing a pipe while exploring the streets of New Orleans.

Chuck



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P&T *Readers Respond*

Thanks M'lady

I thought this was a terrific article on a terrific book. I guess most people who own a copy of *My Lady Nicotine* might know this, but to those who don't, I would like to add one snippet of information that Mr. Rapaport did not include:

When J.M. Barrie wrote this quintessential work, he was not yet an avid pipe smoker. He was a novice. This is his introduction from my copy, which is the 1896 Scribner & Sons edition:

Readers unknown to me frequently write to ask whether I have really given up smoking, and, whether or not, will I kindly let them know where the Arcadia Mixture is to be got? But I seldom answer either question. After keeping it locked in my breast for years, however, let me here divulge a dark secret. When I began to write this book I was no smoker. Instead of having given up the practice most reluctantly as described in these untruthful papers, I was smoking my first pipe gingerly, not because I liked it, but because all my friends smoked, and it seemed unsociable not to smoke with them. I had no pleasure in smoking, my highest ambition was to be able to smoke now and again without apparent effort. How I drifted into writing a book on the subject I cannot remember, but the desire to know both sides was doubtless the reason why I wrote as a slave to tobacco. Oddly enough this assumed character obtained an influence over me, I read his views with attention and began to see that there must be something in them. By the time he had clearly demonstrated the folly of smoking I was a convert to the practice.

I tremendously enjoyed Rapaport's article; I hope he writes one about Christopher Buckley's *Thank You for Smoking*, a book I haven't heard of before. I'll have to pick it up. First I'll smoke some Black Mallory and dance the *My Lady Nicotine* ballet.

David O'Flaherty
From Inside an Ardor UFKM

Canadian suggestion

My wife and I went on a bus tour of Orillia, Ontario, Canada, about an hour's drive from Toronto, and we visited Stephen Leacock's summer home on the shores of Lake Couchiching (Old Brewery Bay). Leacock was a professor of economics at McGill University and published 28 nonfiction books. He is known as Canada's Mark Twain because he also published 35 books of humor, with his best-known work titled *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.

Touring the house I noticed pipe racks, briars and even a few corn cobs in his library and reading rooms. We also toured his small wine cellar. During Prohibition, he angered residents of Orillia when he served beer, wine and spirits. Just as you've highlighted famous American pipe-smoking writers, I would suggest that Stephen Leacock might be of interest to your readers.

Doug Kaiura
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

The family that smokes together ...

Thank you for putting together such a fine publication. I started smoking pipes with my father many years ago, and I have continued to smoke pipes as time has gone by. I have bought, smoked, traded and sold everything from Dr. Grabows to Dunhills, and I enjoyed them all. I applaud your magazine for offering a wide variety of articles on all aspects of pipe smoking. I think it is very interesting to read about high-grade pipes and learn about all the tobaccos and related items that are available.

I started smoking pipes with my father because he is a cool retired Marine Corps drill sergeant and I wanted to be like him. I have continued to smoke

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pipes because it offers relaxation and it is a nice hobby that can be very affordable.

My point is that your magazine is perfect for all pipe smokers and it's just plain fun to read. Having said that, I think I'll go watch my kids play outside and light up one of dad's old Savinellis and be grateful for a publication like yours to read and enjoy.

Clif Jenness
Dallas, Texas

Aw shucks ...

If I were to choose only one word to describe your publication, it would be excellent!

I have enjoyed reading *P&T* ever since the premier issue hit the newsstand more than nine years ago. I first discovered *Pipes and tobaccos* while working in Princeton, N.J., on a business trip. I picked up a copy late one evening while visiting a local Borders book store. Of course, I read it from cover to cover much too quickly, yet it led me to becoming a loyal reader of your magazine and rekindled my pipe smoking and collecting interest. *P&T*'s many interesting articles have led me to a new hobby—visiting and learning more about pipes and tobaccos from many of the people you have featured in your articles. As I travel quite extensively for work, I have allocated some time to stop and visit some of the top local pipe shops and carvers in the cities where I visit.

Due to your magazine, I have become acquainted and become friends with such renowned pipe experts as Julius Vesz (Toronto, Canada), Chuck Levi (Iwan Ries, Chicago, Ill.), Steve Richman (Piedmont Tobacconist, Oakland, Calif.), Marty Pulvers (Sherlock's Haven, San Francisco, Calif.) and Ed Kolpin of the original Tinder Box in Santa Monica, Calif. In fact, I bought my first Peterson Pipe from Ed. What a fine group of gentlemen and excellent resources for a kapnismologist. Reading your magazine led me to purchase Rick Newcombe's book, *In Search of Pipe Dreams*. I had a very cordial conversation with expert piper rejuvenator Jim Benjamin of San Diego. In fact I have a few pipes that I am just getting ready to send to him.

Your magazine has brought me many peaceful times (superb relaxation) and some great new friends. In these last nine years I have found many wonderful treasures (new pipes) at the stores of my newfound friends. One of my most special visits was the first time that I met Julius Vesz. What an interesting gentleman. He graciously provided me a tour of his beautiful shop and pipe-carving quarters. What a tremendous peek into a craft that, at times, has been forgotten by the world. To me Julius epitomizes old-world quality with the inner patience required to produce a product with superior function, not just form. His pipes are works of art and more importantly smoke beautifully. While visiting Toronto I had the opportunity of finding a wonderful new pipe (a Vesz Signature Raindrop) and I enjoyed some fine camaraderie. It was during that visit that I fully realized that I am hooked on pipes and this new hobby. I will be in Chicago later this year and will look forward to seeing my friends at Iwan Ries. Perhaps I will find another Tom Eltang pipe—the one I bought last year could not be finer!

I can't wait to receive my next issue of *P&T* and until then, keep up your great work and thank you for helping me discover a new, lifelong hobby!

Brian G. Barsamian
San Leandro, California

Joura justice

I must admit that I am someone who seldom complains. I have been a fan of *P&T* since its inception and I still look forward to reading every issue cover to cover. However, I must say that I was disappointed with the photographic work in the recent article on Karl-Heinz Joura. As you know, he consistently makes pipes that have near flawless straight grain. When I worked at a tobacco store during my college years, I came across many of Joura's pipes. Each one was beautiful in its own way and each pipe had, without question, immaculate straight grain. I feel as though the pictures that accompany the article do Joura a disservice. Granted, perhaps these were the finest pipes he had to offer that day—though I doubt that this is true. Furthermore, although I, too, can attest to how gifted an artist Tom

Jorgen L

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Eltang is, I feel that Joura's eye for grain is equally impeccable. These two talented artists were featured in the same issue, but the photos that accompanied the Eltang story were much better than the ones that were featured in the Joura story. I understand that Lars Kiel took the pictures of Eltang's pipes (probably as an advertisement), but my point still stands. Smokeability issues aside, Joura's pipes have always had some of the best, most consistent straight grain I have ever seen, and your readers should be aware of that. Should they care? Well, that's another issue altogether. I just wanted to bring this discrepancy to your attention.

Dustin J. Fanciullo
cyberspace

P&T: *You're absolutely right, Karl-Heinz Joura has an incredible ability to create pipes with fascinating straight grains. In the hope of presenting a better representation of Joura's work, we offer you some more photos of Joura's pipes:*

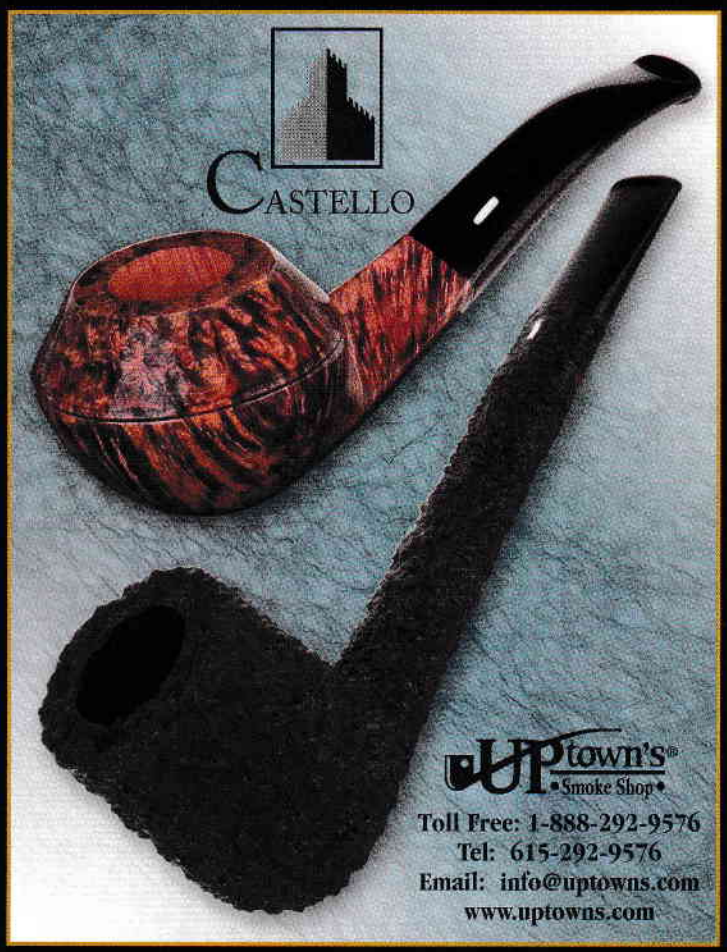
African-American pipe smokers
I am a young African-American who started smoking pipes at the age of 18 and I have been enjoying them ever since. You don't see a lot of young men, especially young black men, smoking pipes. I turn heads all the time when I am smoking and driving in my car or I am out at a local jazz club and I pull out my pipe.

I wanted to know if there would be any issues in the near future that would focus on this subject. I am always excited to meet other pipe smokers, especially other African-American pipe smokers.

Cedric M. Luckey
Columbia, South Carolina

P&T: *You raise a very interesting question—one that we hadn't considered before. We really don't know how many African-American (or other minority) pipe smokers there are. Is there a representative number within the pipe community that mirrors the overall African-American population percentage? We would like to ask our African-American readers to write us with their thoughts and perspective on the issue. While we're at it, we would like to ask our female and other minority pipe smokers to tell us their thoughts as well.*

Phantom fan mail
I wanted to say how much I enjoy Ernest Quintiliani's article "The Phantom Smoker: A Social Experiment." I have had similar experiences and always enjoy the coughing and sputtering that some non-pipe-smokers exhibit. My latest "Social Experiment" was in our local supermarket. I know the new laws but could also not resist the temptation of "pushing it a bit." I kept my pipe locked firmly in my mouth and was told that there was no smoking in the store. I took a couple of empty puffs and showed the very knowledgeable lady that my pipe was empty. She very quickly realized that she had made an error. I tried not to roll my eyes and did not want to be rude to her. As the old saying goes, "two wrongs do not make a right." She was definitely embarrassed. I did, however, enjoy a little chuckle and did enjoy the moment. I normally sit outside in my old van with my dog and enjoy my pipe while my wife does the shopping. People will inevitably cough on the way



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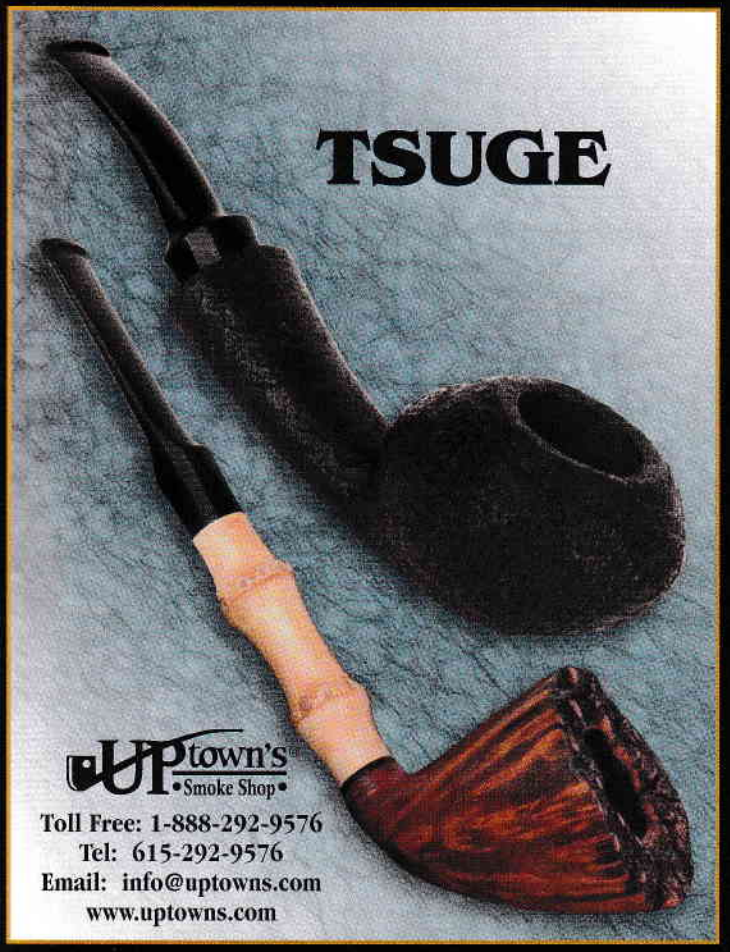

by and I "try" to smile and wave a friendly hello. On the other hand, many people stop and compliment me on the wonderful smell coming from my pipe. It has always led to some very nice conversations. Thanks for the great article!

Chris Rock
cyberspace

Trial By Fire

"Trial By Fire" is always the first section of the magazine that I go to. It has undoubtedly saved me untold dollars on purchasing tobacco that I would end up not smoking. Although the original two fellows reviewing tobaccos are brilliant, it's great to see the others who now contribute. By reading all the reviews, I get a clear picture of each tobacco. Keep up the great work.

Doug Gavin
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

P&T: *You'll notice in this issue that we have returned to the old two-man format with just William Serad and Tad Gage. We think the other reviewers were great and added a dimension to the review column that was valuable and interesting. Unfortunately, we quickly discovered that the format took up far too much space in the magazine. We have limited space, and after painful deliberation we decided that the omission of other pipe-related articles to accommodate the larger review section was detrimental to the balance and scope we try to provide in each issue. We hope to call on our faithful reviewers again in future for other projects, so stay tuned and watch for their names in future issues.*

The Eltang cure

As a subscriber to *P&T* from day one, I continue to savor each and every issue. My continuing compliments to you for the expansive coverage of topics that relate to the world of the straight-grain and the good leaf.

I particularly like the in-depth articles on pipemakers. Aside from the sheer information content, these articles provide so much romance to the lore of pipe smoking and pipe collecting. I really enjoyed the latest entry on Tom Eltang pipes. I own one Eltang pipe, and in addition to the beautiful artistry of the pipe, it is a great smoker.

However, after reading the Eltang article, a question lingers. In selecting a pipe, important issues for me are the origin of the briar and how the briar blocks were cured by the pipemaker.

In most of the past *P&T* articles on pipemakers, these topics are covered. But this is missing in the Eltang article. It is stated that Tom gets to "cherry pick," presumably to select the best grained blocks, from Stanwell stock. Does Tom cure the briar blocks for an additional amount of time or does he leave it to the Stanwell operation to do all of the curing? If the latter, then, could we have some more information on the origin and curing of the briar? Aside from the superb grain, are Eltang briar blocks any different from the briar blocks for the average Stanwell pipe?

Rick Welch
Baltimore, Maryland

P&T: *The only additional process Eltang takes his briar through is to make sure it air cures for at least six months before he uses it. Other than that, it is the same as used by Stanwell.*

Satisfied smoker

I am thrilled to have been the winner of *P&T*'s online Pipe of the Year contest. In the enclosed photo, I am the person seated in the center holding the Castello Collection Grade 2000 Pipe of the Year, which I won in the contest. Also included in the picture are some members of our Washington (PA) Area Pipe Club. Clockwise, beginning on my right, are: Pete Martin, Bill Kotyk, John Karwin, John Seiler and Fuzzy. The late Steve Weiner's personal pipe cabinet can be seen in the background.

George Phillips
Carmichaels, Pennsylvania

P&T: *Congratulations on winning our latest online sweepstakes and we hope that you enjoy your Castello Pipe of the Year for many years to come! We should remind all of our readers to watch for future online sweepstakes.* ***P&T***

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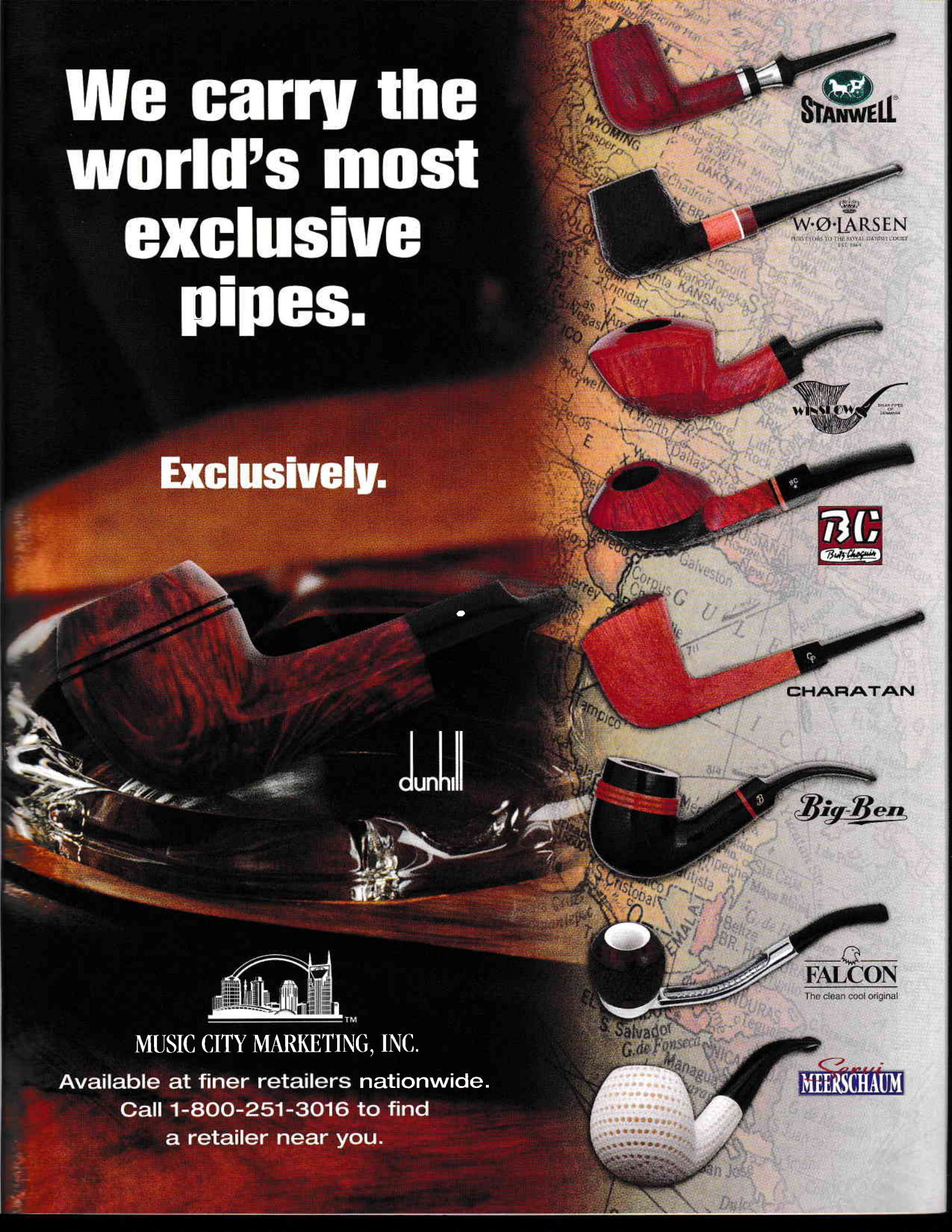

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Awesome Autographs

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If Savinelli doesn't have it, smokers don't need it. This company has something for everyone. Cigar smokers, of course, gravitate to the acclaimed Savinelli lines of cigars, high-quality Savinelli humidors, cigar ashtrays, cases and lighters. We pipe folk are certainly not left out though. Savinelli pipe cabinets, stands, ashtrays, lighters and pipe tools are some of the most beautiful and functional available. But pipes are what launched the success of Savinelli 130 years ago, and the company remains true to that legacy with more different pipe lines in more price ranges than possibly any other company anywhere. You can purchase a Savinelli pipe for $60, $1,100, or anywhere in between and certainly get your money's worth and more at whatever price you choose.

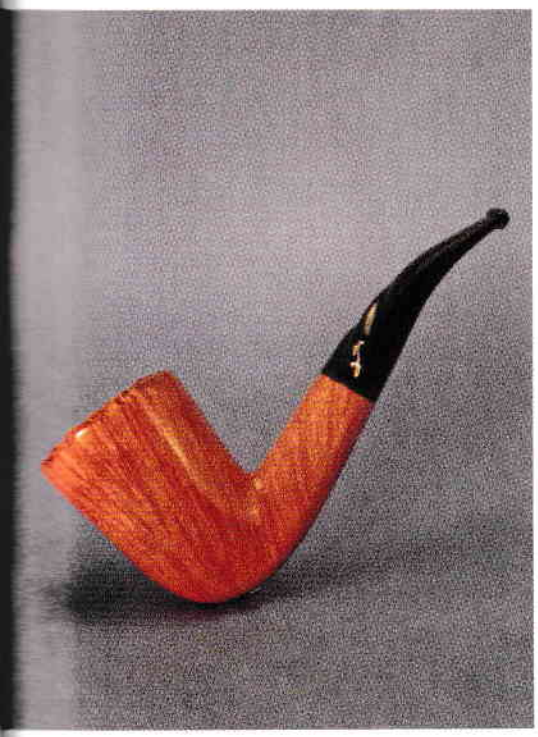
A family-owned and operated business, Savinelli is now run by Giancarlo Savinelli, representing the family's fourth generation since Achille Savinelli started marketing pipes in 1876. Distribution in the United States is handled by Savinelli, Inc., owned and operated by E. Ruben Ysidron for the past 35 years. Along with his many other responsibilities, Ysidron is responsible for choosing the Savinelli products that are available in the U.S., including the acclaimed Autograph pipes that collectors cherish.

"The story of the Autograph pipe," says Ysidron, "is one that starts with only the highest-level quality of briar, chosen from a huge inventory." The Savinelli factory, located in Milan, Italy, maintains a supply of tens of thousands of briar blocks that are dried and cured for years before use. "But not only are the highest levels of briar used for Autographs, but the largest of those blocks are required." Smaller blocks of Autograph-quality briar become Golden Jubilees, which are flawless, perfect pipes, but machine turned and hand finished. "Larger pieces of briar," says Ysidron, "are not easy to come by, especially those qualified to become an Autograph. Weight is also a consideration. We know we're going to end up with a larger pipe, and we don't want that pipe to be heavy. So we may have a beautiful block of briar that would make a gorgeous pipe, but if it's too heavy, we won't use it for Autographs. A heavier piece usually indicates it's a younger piece of briar, so Autographs have to start with well-aged, quality briar."

Ruben Ysidron

Only three Savinelli employees are qualified to produce autographs: Dario Beghetto, Ignazio Guarino and Franco Toscan, with an average of about 35 years of experience each. These craftsmen work on Autographs only during a couple of intervals a year, because any given year's supply of briar yields only so many blocks of that class. "The gentlemen who carve these pipes," says Ysidron, "spend a lot of time just looking at the blocks, choosing which ones they wish to carve. They might find 30 blocks that attract their interest and that they have design ideas for. And not all three carvers work on Autographs at the same time; they rotate. Giancarlo feels that if they rotate, you won't take anything away from the creativity of that individual. If you had all three working at once, seeing what the other guys were doing, it could influence what they are thinking. So each one does his own work individually, to enhance creativity."

The carvers are given whatever time they need to take full advantage of the exemplary briar they have at their disposal. Even so, briar is full of surprises, and sometimes the original design doesn't accommodate pits and minor flaws that may appear during the creative process. "We don't know how much time it will take for each to get through his blocks," says Ysidron. "If a block has to be reworked and reworked, it won't be an Autograph and it could become



some other grade. Briar is something that nature produces, and you can't anticipate what may happen." About 2 percent of the briar purchased by Savinelli is intended for potential Autograph manufacture. Of course, most of that doesn't end up as Autographs, because of the inevitable hidden flaws in the wood. Thus, production is quite low for this high-end line.

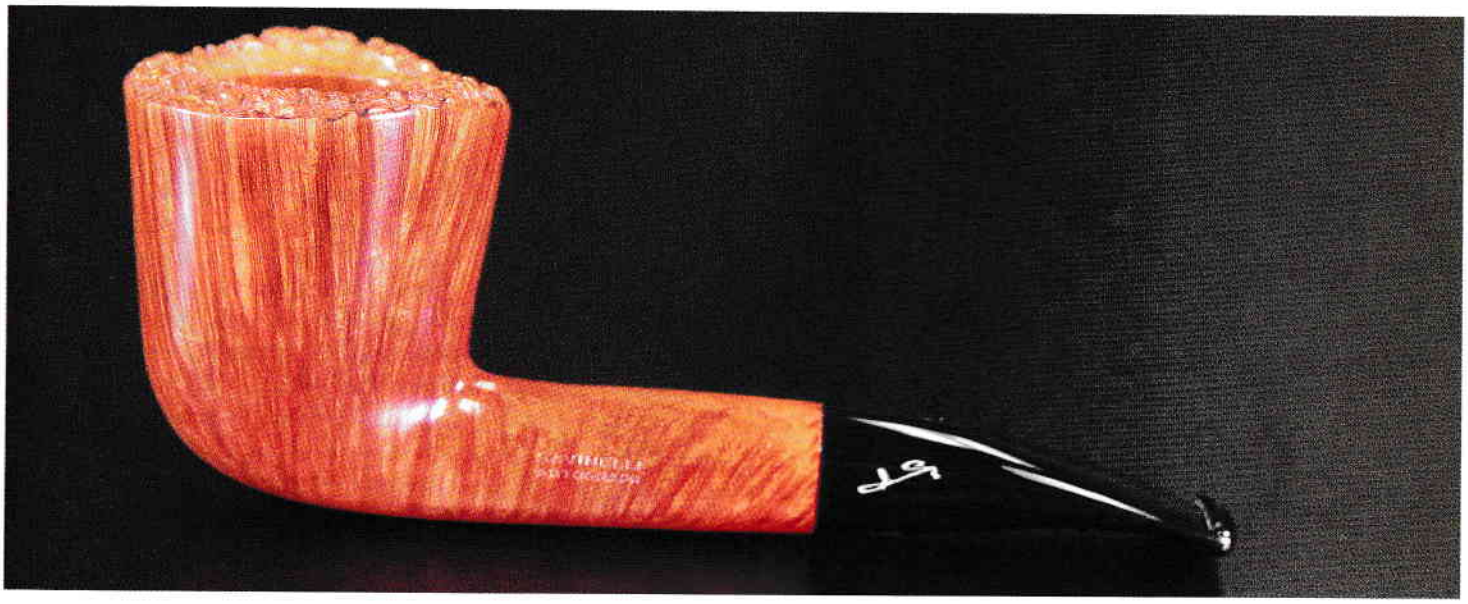
The carvers have a deep attachment to their craft and to Savinelli. Craftsmen who have since retired often still visit the factory to see how design ideas are progressing. Pipemaking is part of who they are, and they enjoy coming back to Savinelli to share ideas and techniques, maintaining a close relationship with the craft long after retirement.

Though Savinelli has a long history, it continues to upgrade equipment and procedures. "We have one of the most modern factories in all of Italy," says Ysidron.

Once the Autographs are finished, they must be graded, and Giancarlo Savinelli is the one who decides the grades. Smooth Autographs are graded 4, 5, 6, 8, 0, 00 and 000. Sandblasted Autographs are graded 4 and 5. "Our sandblast process is true sandblasting," says Ysidron. "We individually hand-blast each pipe. We use river sand at high velocity, and the artist holds the pipe with heavy rubber gloves and turns the pipe and carefully blasts it. It's an art form. There are other, more economical ways to sandblast pipes. Some companies throw 200 bowls into a tub and agitate it with some medium to texture the wood. And that's fine, but in our opinion, that's not the correct way to sandblast a pipe. Our process is certainly more labor-intensive, but we believe the quality of the final product is obvious and worth the investment. And our price points are very reasonable. I feel that a $120 sandblasted Savinelli can stand up against any $300 or $400 sandblasted pipe by other companies."

Autographs, like 90 percent of Savinelli pipes, are fitted with the Savinelli balsa filter system, which reduces moisture and helps promote a more pleasant smoking experience. "It's a good idea," says Ysidron, "especially for new pipe smokers, for to-

VIP
COLLECTION



The rare Autograph seven-day set pictured on these two pages was selected piece by piece by Ruben Ysidron on one of his regular visits to the Savinelli factory this year. Particular care is given to choosing pieces that provide an aesthetically pleasing range of shapes and match each other in coloring.

bacco shops to recommend a filter pipe to help reduce tongue bite. We think the Savinelli balsa system is best, but there are other filter systems available, and any is better for a new smoker than to do without. New pipesmokers could be lost to tongue bite if they are given nonfilter pipes from the outset. The balsa system is very neutral and doesn't change the flavor of the tobacco, but it does reduce potential harshness, moisture and bite."

The Savinelli balsa filter system came about in the late 1970s. It was developed by the manager of the factory at that time, Mario Vettoruzzo, who passed away about a year and a half ago. "He was a real pipesmoker," says Ysidron. "He had a pipe in his mouth 24 hours a day; he loved pipes. He got this idea about balsa wood and started cutting small pieces and putting them in the mortises of his pipes and putting the mouthpieces back in. And he said it really helped, especially when you're smoking a pipe all day long. It made Achille curious, and he asked Mr. Mario to cut him a few pieces of balsa for his own pipes. After they experimented for a while, they asked me what I thought, so I tried it, and it worked; it was really good. So we redesigned the engineering to accommodate the balsa and it took off and became very popular. We sell an incredible volume of balsa filters, so people certainly seem to like the system." For those who prefer nonfilter smoking, each Savinelli pipe comes with an adaptor so that the filter is unnecessary. Some pipe smokers prefer omitting the adaptor as well as the filter, so there are three ways to adjust a Savinelli to individual tastes.

So choices abound for the Savinelli pipesmoker, from filter to nonfilter and from inexpensive pipes to top-of-the-line Autographs. The Autographs, of course, are the most spectacular of the many pipes available, fabulous to hold and admire as well as smoke, but there are certainly other options, more than most people could ever want. There's something for everyone. ***P&T***

About the Space-Age *the pipe*

by Billie W. Taylor II, Ph.D.

Like most smokers "of a certain age," I first bought a *the pipe* in the late 1960s, when it first came out with the promise of being a cooler, drier, less hazardous smoke. It was made of plastic with a pyrolytic graphite cup lining the tobacco chamber. Pyrolytic graphite is a specialized metal that is used primarily for nuclear power plant plumbing and rocket nozzles and nose cones.

Sadly, *the pipe* did not develop a strong following among briar and meerschaum smokers. Veteran pipe smokers said *the pipes* smoked hot and wet and made the tobacco taste bitter. These may have been unfair criticisms, because smokers of meerschaum and briar pipes have certain habits that reduce or eliminate the advantages of smoking with the pyrolytic graphite bowl liner: They pack tobacco in the bowl too tightly; they allow a cake to build up and then scrape the bowl, damaging the liner; they puff too vigorously, reducing the venturi effect of combustion in the liner; and they use aromatic and strong tobacco blends that have much truer flavor in this kind of pipe than in others. Also, though these pipes produce less "goo" than briars or meerschaums, they do need to have a pipe cleaner run through them during and immediately after a smoke to control condensation. When this is done, instead of a collection of several pipes being needed to allow time for moisture to dry out between each smoke, only two or three are necessary to provide a satisfactory rotation. When not done, one of the important advantages of *the pipe* is lost. So, when *the pipe* came out, experienced pipe smokers were unlikely to buy many of the pipes. Heavy promotion could not compensate for the negative reception, and production ended in the mid-1970s.

Because so many confirmed briar and meerschaum smokers are not fond of *the pipe*, it is unlikely to ever have a great following in the collectibles market. Even so, there are a few fans, this author among them, and the interval of more than 25 years since the last *the pipe* was made has caused them to be more and more difficult to find. Most present collectors began with a pipe they liked when they got their first *the pipe* in the 1960s or 1970s and tried to get another one or two to smoke. Other than those, there are only a handful of folks who collect these pipes for their own sake.

These pipes surface at pipe shows and on the Internet auction sites fairly regu-

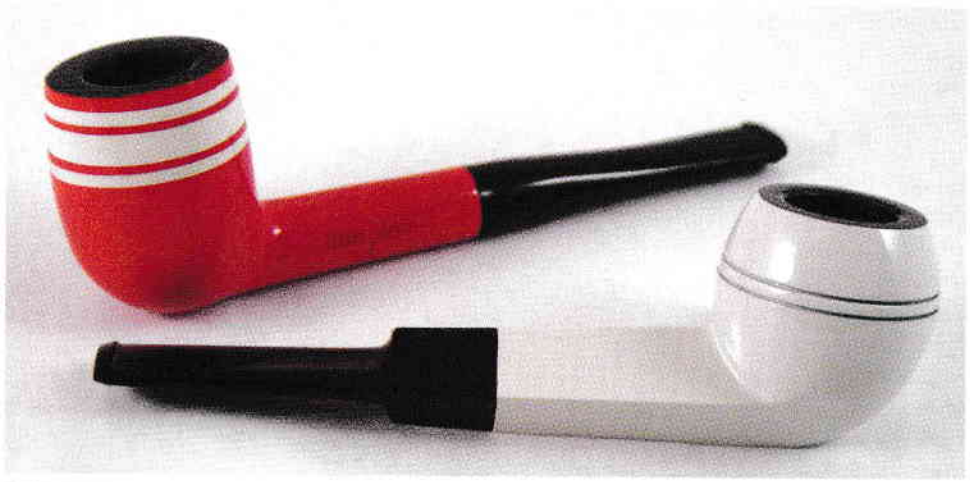
larly. At any given large pipe show, half a dozen or more are usually offered, and the Internet auction site eBay may have a dozen or more on any given day. This makes it worth our time to discuss what makes one more valuable and desirable than another and how to value them as collectibles.

Most dealers place little or no value on these pipes because smokers generally do not want them. It is not at all uncommon to find them in the $2 bag or $5 basket on *the pipe* show tables and in a group of damaged pipes and old pipe racks on eBay. These auctions generally have titles such as "Nice pipe rack with six pipes" or "19 used pipes." When listed individually for auction, these pipes typically start at two to five dollars and end at $20 or so, if there are any bids at all. The most I have ever seen paid at an auction was $151 for an unsmoked example in its complete original packaging with literature, but the average is less than $40.

More knowledgeable dealers have become aware that there is a small group of collectors who will pay more than trash prices for a desirable *the pipe*, though prices are still quite reasonable. It is unlikely that these pipes will ever rise to prices that remotely approach those for a 19th-century meerschaum or a high-end briar from the mid-20th century, at least not in our lifetime. For those of you reading this who are contemplating *the pipe* as an investment, be warned: You will not make money with these pipes. I know of only three substantial collections of *the pipe*, and only one of those (mine) is held by someone who smokes only *the pipe* and has no other pipe-collecting interest. There are perhaps a couple of dozen others who have a small collection of *the pipe* for smoking. When the current generation of the few smokers who enjoy these pipes is gone, the collections may well prove worthless. Collect for the love of the item, not for the prospective gain.

That said, the would-be collector or seller of these pipes must begin somewhere.

The first thing to consider is the packaging and enclosed literature. Obviously, pipes that are unsmoked in their original packaging are the most desirable for collectors. Up through 1971, *the pipe* was sold in a cardboard box the same color as the pipe (except that black-pipe boxes were brown). All of the printing on the box was always in black. Sometimes the end flap of



the box had a white window on which the shape and color of the pipe were printed. The pipe was in a red velvet sleeve inside the box. "The Story of *the pipe*" brochure was stuffed in the box around the sleeve.

Later, *the pipe* was sold in a black cardboard box with a transparent cover on which was printed "*the pipe* by Venturi" in gold lettering. Inside the box, the pipe was held by a black elastic band in a shaped cutout on a cardboard insert. "The Story of *the pipe*" brochure was laid flat under the insert. This box was contained in a white cardboard outer box with two labels on the end flap—an oval label with *the pipe* and a shape name on it above an oblong label with the color name.

Pipe shells for the "feather ROCK" collection were made with polyester resin, not plastic, and have pyrolytic graphite bowl liners. These pipes were packaged in a cream-and-gray box with black print on the cream part and white print on the gray. In the box is a different edition of "The Story of *the pipe*" brochure that says the series came in two shapes—Blue Ridge and Sierra—and three colors. The Blue Ridge has a more elongated rim that tapers back over the mouthpiece, while the Sierra is straight across the back of the rim. The colors were striated green, gray and brown. These pipes are not imprinted or labeled in any way, so unless you are lucky enough to get one in its original packaging, they must be recognized by their appearance.

THE SMOKE also was introduced around 1971. The bowl liners were a less effective "carbonized carbon" instead of true pyrolytic graphite. The literature on THE SMOKE mentions four colors (black, blue, red and yellow) and four shapes (Berkeley, Graduate, Village and Woodstock), which were called designs. White pipes in all four designs have also turned up. These pipes were packaged in a clear cellophane sleeve inside custom cardboard boxes with a brochure insert titled "The Promise." Toward the end of the life of the company, THE SMOKE pipes were also packed in the bubble-pack tobacco/pipe promotional intended for Venturi pipes. Occasionally, the Graduate and Village shapes were not painted on the top surface of the rim. Apparently this is not a defect, just a different painting technique.

Venturi pipes had no bowl liner at all. The only literature on Venturi pipes (introduced around 1972) found so far is that on the packaging of the Mr. President and Spirit of '76 lines. There were three shapes (Bent, Billiard and Pot) in five colors (black, blue, green, red and white). Orange and forest-green pipes from this line have also been reported, but whether they were factory-painted or later additions remains uncertain. The Spirit of '76 pipes are white with a red, white and blue foil band around the shank and packaged in a bubble-pack with a pouch of tobacco. The Mr. President pipes were also in promotional bubble-pack packages containing a pipe and a pouch of one of various brands of tobacco, but once the package has been opened, there is no way to determine if the pipe is one of these or not. Several other pipes with decals of one sort or another have also been found. However, these apparently were added by purchasers of the pipes and were not applied by the manufacturer.

Next, the collector must consider whether or not the pipe has been smoked. Often, the pipe has been cleaned (after all, just running it through a dishwasher will clean it up pretty well), but there is one absolutely positive indicator that *the pipe* has never had tobacco lit in it, not even once. The pyrolytic graphite liner in an unsmoked pipe has a silvery sheen that, once heated, disappears and cannot be restored. (I have seen it tried by rubbing a pencil or graphite on the liner after it has been cleaned up, but that wipes off with a swipe of the finger.) If that silvery sheen is not present or it wipes off, *the pipe* has been smoked at least once. There are, of course, degrees of having been smoked, and each level makes *the pipe* progressively less desirable to a collector. Those levels range from "unsmoked" to "liner scraped and damaged."

The value to a collector is also in the shape of the pipe. The more common shapes—the Apple, Bent, Billiard, Bulldog and Pot (the original five shapes that were offered from the very beginning until the bitter end)—are less valuable than the Dublin, which entered the lineup at about the same time as colors began being offered in 1967. The Author and Canadian shapes became available about 1973 and are seen even less often than the Dublin.

Offered for only a year or so around 1966 to 1967, the Giant Pot is extremely rare and is the most valuable shape of all. Apparently, it entered the lineup late and was abandoned early in favor of the Dublin. It was probably never offered in colors. Regardless of condition, a Giant Pot would be a significant find. All *the pipe* Pots have a stummel of less than 3 inches. The Giant Pot stummel is longer than 3 inches. The Giant Pot will be overall larger than the Pot, but stummel length may be the only measurement that can be made without calipers.

Other factors of condition also affect a pipe's collectibility:

1) The imprint should be clear and the same color as the rest of the pipe. (If it's not, it's either dirty or, in the case of black pipes, has had the paint buffed off.)

2) Any Fashion Stripes should not be fuzzy or broken.

3) The mouthpiece should not be a replacement or chewed. (A replacement mouthpiece may not have the O-ring on the tenon or will be too long or too short.)

The finish of the pipe is also important, but this is more important for the Ebony or Oyster White finishes than for, say, the Raspberry or Mocha Brown ones. Even some pipe-shop pipes that have never been smoked often show some paint damage from being in a drawer or whatever. The more chips and scratches, the less a collector would want to pay for a pipe. Some colors seem to be more fragile than others, and perfect specimens of these are difficult to find.

The last aspect discussed here, but probably the first noticed by the collector, is color. Ebony, or black, was far and away the most common color and is not difficult to find in all the shapes, although finding the Canadian and Author shapes can be more challenging.

The first colors offered were Oyster White, Burnt Orange, Avocado Green, Ash Gray, Federal Gold and Horizon Blue.

Two of these, white and gold, maintained the same nomenclature throughout the manufacture of the pipes. However, different paints and indifferent quality control permitted quite a range of hues within these two colors. The gold may be anything from a brownish-gold to a canary yellow. The white has less variability than the gold, but ranges from a creamy cast to almost gray.

Burnt Orange has even more shades. And there is at least one box that says just "Orange" on it, although there is no other documentation for that color name. Presumably, the differences in shades are again more a matter of variations in paint than of being different colors.

Avocado Green remained remarkably consistent throughout production and it is unclear whether another shade of green was added or if Avocado Green transmogrified into Sage Green between 1970 and 1972. It is unlikely that the questions about the production of these two green colors will ever be resolved with any degree of certainty. Dark-green pipes have also turned up, but the literature does not document this color at all.

Ash Gray was the first shade of gray mentioned as an available color among those offered in the earliest brochure that mentions colors. It was not mentioned again in subsequent brochures, being replaced by Morocco Gray.

Horizon Blue, a robin's-egg or very light blue, is in the earliest brochure. It was replaced in the literature almost at once with English Blue, a much darker, richer color. If this theory of color replacement is correct, then there were never any Canadian or Author shapes made in Horizon Blue, because these shapes were introduced long after the change from Horizon Blue to English Blue.

The red colors are particularly problematic. The brochure that announces the introduction of colors (in 1967?) mentions Maroon, but after a hiatus of several editions, it reappears in what is believed to be the last edition as Persian Maroon. Burgundy Red first appears in a brochure issued around 1973. Vermilion is not men-

tioned in any brochures but is named in a 1972 pipe-shop catalog. It seems most likely that Burgundy Red and Vermilion are two names for the same color.

It would be a happy state of affairs if pink pipes were simply called "Pink." In 1974, the color surfaces as California Rosé. Meanwhile, a 1969 advertisement says Raspberry is an available color. There are pipes that match both names, but it is uncertain if California Rosé is a successor color to Raspberry or if they are two names for the same color. This issue is likely to remain unresolved until new pipes in labeled boxes are found.

Pipes painted brown were mentioned in a 1969 advertisement and called Mocha Brown, but in a 1972 pipe-shop catalog, they were called Tan. It seems most likely that this is one color with two names.

The 1972 pipe-shop catalog also names Melon as an available color, but an undated Gimbel's Department Store brochure shows the same color and calls it Coral, as does the 1967 "The Story of *the pipe*" brochure.

Although there are no references in the literature to the Rare Woods and Real Briar versions of *the pipe*, examples of the Real Briar exist as do examples of the prototype designs of the Rare Woods. The kind folks at Venturi and Super-Temp have confirmed that they did indeed make and sell these for a time.

Fashion Stripes are all in a color or colors contrasting with the basic color of the shell and circle the top of the bowl. The striping was done by hand and the workers were allowed great latitude in applying them. They were called Rally Stripes from 1967 to 1970, and then Fashion Stripes. Some distributors called them Racing Stripes. There are at least eight, and maybe more, distinct Fashion Stripes designs. The only named Fashion Stripes pattern, the All-American (sometimes called the Americana), comprises two very narrow red stripes alternating with two very narrow blue stripes on an Oyster White pipe. It is unlikely that any collector will ever achieve the goal of having an example of all the possible combinations. Some collectors place a premium on striped pipes while others think stripes detract from a pipe's value.

Bulldogs were sometimes made with the top half of the bowl in a contrasting color. These were called Bulldog Buff Designs. Eight Buff Designs are mentioned in the literature: Burnt Orange with a black top; Oyster White with black; Federal Gold with black; Avocado Green with black; Federal Gold with white; Burgundy Red with white; Avocado Green with white; and English Blue with white. The name comes from the method of removing paint from the top half of the bowl: buffing.

The multicolored California Style pipes are interesting. When they came out in 1973, a number of folks bought them and put them aside thinking that they would be a collectible at some future time. The irony is that because so many people did that, California Style pipes are easily found today, many still in their original packaging! They still bring a premium price, though, because each is unique.

Another irony in collecting these pipes is that the fairly common colors of Burgundy Red and English Blue seem to command a premium, while the truly rare colors, such as Coral, Raspberry and Mocha Brown, go unnoticed!

Most serious collectors use some kind of rating system to decide what a pipe might be worth at a sale, show or auction. The systems used by briar and meerschaum smokers have great limitations when being applied to these quirky pipes. There are any number of ways to go about arriving at a price you would be willing to pay. Just apply the factors to consider in this order: packaging, usage, finish, mouthpiece, shape, color and imprint. My Web site, *http://billietaylor.com*, has a page called "Valuing *the pipe*," which might be of assistance to you as a starting point in collecting *the pipe*. The pipe's variables are just too numerous to present cogently here. But these many permutations are part of what makes these seemingly simple pipes so fascinating. ***P&T***

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Gateway to Excellence

For nearly 50 years, Berlin-based Planta Tabak has been providing quality tobacco products for a wide variety of smokers

by Stephen A. Ross

Berlin's Brandenburg Gate has become the timeless symbol of the thriving German capital. Taking seven years to construct and finished in 1795, the neoclassical structure is modeled on the entrance to the Acropolis in Athens. The gate features Doric columns that are crowned with an entablature with bas-relief scenes from Greek mythology, and the proud bronze Quadriga sits atop the structure.

Originally regarded as a symbol of peace, the Quadriga was taken to Paris when Napoleon's troops occupied the city in 1806. After Napoleon's defeat eight years later, the Quadriga returned to its home and was rededicated as a symbol of victory.

Dr. Manfred Obermann and Dr. Ellen Stiller

Throughout two centuries, the Quadriga's bronze developed a green patina as the Brandenburg Gate witnessed colossal events in Berlin's history. The devastation of war was followed by more than 40 years of division, with half the city cast firmly behind the Iron Curtain.

In November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell and jubilant Germans gathered on both sides of the Brandenburg Gate to celebrate. A month later, the gate was opened to regular traffic and a divided city became whole once again.

Transforming from an icon of peace to a symbol of victory, the Brandenburg Gate has now become a representation of Berlin's rekindled unity. A full restoration effort completed in 2002 removed the green patina from the Quadriga's bronze and the statue now radiantly shines, heralding a bright and hopeful future for Berlin and its residents.

Adopting the Brandenburg Gate as part of its logo, Berlin-based Planta Tabak produces high-quality tobaccos that satisfy a wide range of smokers. Founded in 1956, Planta is a medium-sized, family-operated company that produces a fifth of all of the pipe tobacco that Germans consume each year. The company has also grown to include a roll-your-own tobacco division, and it produces Design Berlin pipes (a feature on Design Berlin will appear in an upcoming issue of *P&T*).

Planta's headquarters are located in central Berlin—not far from the Brandenburg Gate—in a stately four-story red brick building. Beautiful ornate wood panel walls accentuate the elaborate wooden stairs leading to the conference room where Dr. Manfred Obermann, Planta's president, waits with his daughter, Dr. Ellen Stiller, and Gerd Wiesenhütter, Planta's export manager.

Like the stairwell outside, the conference room features heavy wood paneling, but four large bay windows let in ample light to brighten the interior. More than 50 pouches and tins of all of Planta's tobaccos are arrayed on a counter that runs the length of the room beneath the windows.

Obermann founded Planta Tabak in 1956 as a processing facility for filler tobaccos for cigars. He has a ruddy face with a close-cropped mustache. Stiller is a businesswoman who is slowly assuming control of Planta's day-to-day operations as Obermann prepares for retirement. Soft-spoken and jovial, Wiesenhütter is the only person in the room with a full understanding of both German and English, and he translates the conversation.

At its inception, Planta primarily bought and processed filler tobaccos for cigars, but it also found itself in the pipe tobacco business as it sought to find a use for the scrap tobacco that was left over from production. "At the time, most of the pipe tobacco that was available in Germany was made from cigar clippings," Obermann says. "It was natural that we would enter that market."

Six years after establishing Planta,

Obermann formed a friendship with Walter Wellauer, a Swiss tobacco wholesaler and importer. Wellauer asked Obermann to produce an English blend for him to sell in Switzerland. Planta developed Wellauer's English Blend, making its first true pipe tobacco blend. "It was an English blend, we got the license to sell it in Switzerland, and we produced the tobacco in Germany—it was quite an international affair," says Obermann with a laugh.

Planta followed the production of Wellauer's English Blend with its second brand, Rum and Maple, but the company learned that making pipe tobacco blends involved far more than taking scraps of cigar leaves and calling it pipe tobacco. "We had to learn everything about making pipe tobacco," Obermann states. "It was completely different than the traditional way of making pipe tobacco in Germany at that time, and we had to understand how to treat the tobacco in accordance to the composition of the blend—the way it's cut and the tobaccos it contains."

As the company's tobacco knowledge grew throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s, other brands were added to production. In 2005, Planta now produces 25 pipe tobacco blends, including Jacaranda, Pergamon, Danish Black Vanilla, San Souci, Cellini, Holger Danske, Germaine's Mixture No. 7, Black and Bright, Presbyterian Mixture, Kentucky Club, McLintock and Brigg.

By the 1980s, Planta Tabak had developed its reputation in Germany as a manufacturer of high-quality tobaccos. It had obtained the license to produce and sell some international blends, such as Germaine's Mixture No. 7, and continued to produce them while developing its own blends. The company also continued making private-label pipe tobaccos. "Planta tried to replicate pipe tobaccos that had disappeared from local markets," Obermann says. "We would make the blends in Germany and sell them in the local markets and keep the brands alive. But developing our own blends has allowed us to significantly grow in the last 10 years."

Planta pipe tobaccos are now available in 45 countries. James Norman Ltd. distributes some Planta pipe tobaccos in the United States. Obermann and Stiller insist that with so many blends available, Planta has a suitable blend for all tastes.

"Planta tobaccos are very suitable for beginners because all of our tobaccos burn easily and slowly," Obermann says. "They keep burning and you don't need to light them four or five times."

"Planta also produces quite a number of special blends for experienced pipe smokers," Stiller interjects. "We offer flake tobaccos and cube-cuts. We have a very nice range of high-class tobaccos. We use tobacco from all over the world that's high-quality."

"No matter if it's an aromatic or a natural blend, our tobacco would stand up on its own," Obermann states. "We're able to do a very difficult thing—cover the range of consumers' tastes, from Dunhill to Wal-Mart."

After discussing Planta's history with Obermann, it's time to leave the headquarters and tour the factory. Located in northwestern Berlin, Planta's factory is housed in a nondescript three-story brick building. With offices and a conference room situated in the front of the building and the production facility in the rear, the factory encompasses a little more than 18,000 square feet and employs more than 135 people. In 2004, the factory processed more than 700 tons of pipe tobacco and roll-your-own tobacco.

The fragrant and intoxicating aroma of thousands of pounds of tobacco wafts through the air inside the factory. The actual production facility is amazingly large, spanning one entire floor of the

Horst Quernheim

factory. Cutting machines and steamers process tobacco across the floor from left to right (if viewed while standing with one's back to the front of the building).

Plant manager Horst Quernheim conducts the tour with Stiller and Wiesenhütter. "There are three segments of the production facility—one for pipe tobacco, another for Planta's roll-your-own cigarette tobacco, and a third for cigar-filler tobaccos," Quernheim says. "All the tobacco is prepared on one production line and then it's divided into two separate production lines—one for the roll-your-own tobacco and the other for pipe tobacco. All of the tobacco is packed in the same packaging room."

Tobacco enters the factory in compressed bales that resemble pieces of particleboard stacked on top of one another. Planta's tobacco purchasers travel around the world to buy the highest-quality leaf. "We are always looking at the market for tobaccos that are suitable for our blends," Stiller says. "We buy enough tobacco to have stock for one year."

To process the tobacco, the leaf must be made pliable by adding moisture. It's placed onto a pallet to be transported to the steamer. The steamer resembles an oversized industrial washing machine and has space for approximately a dozen bales to be steamed at once. "We look at the tobacco to determine how many times it must be steamed," Quernheim says. "We create a vacuum inside the machine and then apply the steam. It takes between one and four applications of the process before the tobacco is pliable and can be removed from the pallet."

After a tobacco bale has undergone the steaming process, it typically weighs around 440 pounds. The pallets with the bales are then rolled next to a machine that appears to stand almost two stories high. The bales are placed onto a conveyor that moves them up toward giant spinning wheels that are fitted with prongs that tear the bales apart, separating the leaves for casing.

"Casing is a big job," Stiller says as she walks to the casing machine. The tobacco is fed into the machine by one of the ubiquitous conveyor belts that traverse the factory. The casing takes place inside a metal cylinder at the center of the machine, from which a mentholated odor emanates. "The casing must permeate the entire leaf to make sure it will be preserved properly."

After the tobacco has been cased, it's loaded onto a conveyor belt that feeds into the cutting machine, which has five knives that each make two to three cuts through the tobacco. Sparks are visible through the machine's Plexiglas window, caused by the continuous diamond-sharpening of the blades. The cut of the tobacco varies depending on how Planta plans to use it. "For roll-your-own tobacco, the cut is 0.3 to 0.4 millimeters," Quernheim says. "German law dictates that the average cut for pipe tobacco is 1.5 millimeters. Cigar-filler tobaccos must be cut to a width of at least 1.8 millimeters. This is law because there are different tax rates for tobacco products. The tax rate for fine-cut is higher than the tax rate for pipe tobacco, which is higher than the tax rate for cigars."

Cutting the tobacco is the final step before it's placed into preblends. Planta makes between 15 and 20 preblends, which are used to make its finished blends. "We have recipes that tell us the percentages of the various preblends we need to make one of our blends," Stiller says. "Tobacco changes every year, so we have to change our blend percentages every year to keep our consistency. The best way for us to do that is to make our preblends."

To make a Planta pipe tobacco blend, the necessary preblends are measured and then put into large metal blending boxes. The boxes are filled and then shaken by a machine to mix the blend. During this

process, flavoring agents are applied to the blend.

"Our blends contain as few as three to as many as eight different preblends," Quernheim says. "The blending boxes can mix and flavor as few as 11 pounds to as many as 110 pounds. Then all the flavored blends are mixed once more and put into boxes. We face very tough restrictions with ingredients in Germany. We don't use any flavoring agents that are harmful. German law dictates that we use only food-grade ingredients."

After they've been blended and flavored, almost all of the tobaccos are ready to be packaged, with the exception of the cake blends, such as Germaine's Mixture No. 7. When Planta bought Germaine's Mixture No. 7 in 1970, the company brought the old machinery from the Germaine factory to Berlin, and it still uses the same tobacco presses for Mixture No. 7 that Germaine had used since 1820.

"To make a cake, the tobacco must be pressed for two or three days at about 440 psi," Stiller says. "When the pressing process is finished, the tobacco is solid like wood. We'll cut the cakes into slices for flake tobacco or ready-rubbed flakes."

After touring the factory, Stiller, Quernheim and Wiesenhütter return to the factory's conference room and discuss the process of creating new blends and Planta's future.

Planta takes at least six months to produce a new blend but finds that the creation process is more likely to last more than a year. "There are different ways to come up with a new blend," Stiller says. "Sometimes we'll take different blends and try to meld them together to create something new. Other times we start completely from scratch."

Planta attempts to create tobaccos that not only taste good but look good as well. "We'll create the blend and make sure that the tobacco doesn't bite and that it smells good," Quernheim says. "We also want to make sure that it looks good in the packaging by melding different cuts and different colors."

Planta develops new blends through its own creative expression and through what the market demands. The company also receives specific requests for blends to develop for its private-label customers. Throughout its history, Planta has shown a flexible attitude in the products that it produces. "When Planta first started in the German market, pipe smokers liked

flavored tobaccos and we developed high-quality, aromatic tobaccos," Stiller says. "Now, we find that more people want unflavored tobaccos, and so we are developing blends to fill that market."

The most important consideration Planta personnel bear in mind is to always think of the pipe smokers. "Pipe tobacco is an individual business and you must have a heart for the product," says Wiesenhütter. "Pipe smokers are pipe smokers, no matter where they are. There are slight differences, but at the end of the day, we are all pipe smokers and you must fulfill their needs."

Like Berlin itself, Planta has seen a decade of growth and prosperity. The company will soon add another 8,000 square feet of production space to its factory. After nearly 50 years in the business, Obermann retains a strong passion for the leaf, which he has handed down to Stiller and the rest of Planta's people. The result is a strong dedication to providing high-quality tobaccos that satisfy a wide range of smokers' tastes. ***P&T***

Planta pipe tobaccos are available at tobacco shops nationwide. To find your nearest Planta pipe tobacco dealer, contact James Norman Ltd. at 218-A S. Van Brunt St., Englewood, NJ 07631; 800.525.5629; fax: 201.227.1642; jamesnormanltd@aol.com.

A Spring Runs Through It

Milan Tobacconists offers a full line of original blends and will celebrate its centennial in 2012

By Dale Harrison

It may be the steady humidification of the natural underground spring that cuts a tiny stream through the cement floor of the tobacco cellar at Milan Tobacconists. Or the subtle aromas conveyed to each blend by the decades-old tobacco tumbler that sits in the cellar, seasoned by the numerous morsels of tobacco that have gently toppled inside. It may be the doting hands of tobacconist David Meyer as he meticulously marries each blend, building on a tobacco tradition forged by Joe Milan Sr. and refined by his three sons through much of the 20th century. It is an exceptional tradition influenced by masters such as Peter Stokkebye.

Actually, it's the truly unique combination of all these features along with the carefully crafted and carefully guarded recipes at Milan that give its wide-ranging tobacco blends their distinctive quality.

Whether you are an old hand or a greenhorn, there is something worth taking a match to in Milan's line of tobaccos. For the novice pipe smoker, there's the aromatic, palate-pleasing Sportsman. Its fruity room note also makes it a pal-pleasing mixture. For the more experienced palate, perhaps one that is even a bit jaded and looking for a pleasant jolt, Rovada provides a poignant punch to staid senses that need a little rejuvenation.

While the aroma of tobacco that fills Milan Tobacconists is surely enticing, the store's long and abundant history and affable staff are equally endearing. Set in picturesque and mountainous Roanoke, Va., Milan is zeroing in on its 100-year anniversary. From the spacious main parlor behind the tobacco counter, a narrow cinder-block staircase descends into the underground tobacco cellar. The staircase is lined along the left with large tubs of Milan's special blends. At the bottom of the steps, a cramped turn to the right exposes an out-of-place cement overhang that threatens the unwary forehead. Beyond, the cellar opens up expansively to

Milan's tobacco tumbler is powered by a WWII B-29 bomber machine gun turret and sits in a tobacco cellar that is humidified by an underground spring.

fragrant tobaccos and cool air, chilled noticeably by the surrounding earth and trickling spring that runs through it. In the rear of the cellar, tucked away in a cubbyhole, is the handmade tobacco tumbler through which every Milan blend makes its journey. The tumbler is fashioned from a metal barrel and driven by a fan belt attached to a genuine machine-gun turret salvaged from a World War II B-29 bomber. There is little at Milan that seems ordinary.

Joe Milan Sr. first broke ground on the store in 1912. Since then, for nearly a century, it has belonged to only two families. Joe Milan Sr.'s sons—Herbert, Ellis and Joe Jr.—kept the store in the family and carried it to modernity as Milan Bros. Tobacconists.

"I'll sleep in a tent in the parking lot before I lose this store," says David Meyer. "It's so well established and has so many loyal customers."

With a devoted clientele both over the counter and over the Internet, chances are the Meyers won't be pitching a tent in the parking lot. The Internet clientele is expanding. Online sales account for about 35 percent of total pipe-tobacco sales. In addition to traversing the United States, Milan ships its blends to worldwide destinations, including Australia, England and Ireland. Renee Meyer manages the store's online sales and says she tries to overcome what can be an impersonal Internet in her communications with customers.

"I really try to add that personal touch with our customers," she says. "I try to make sure everything is just right and that customers feel they are getting personal attention."

Meyer won't hesitate to pick up the phone to reach a customer and ensure an order is perfect and prompt. And through e-mail exchanges, her regular Internet clientele is likely to learn a little bit about Renee—perhaps her affinity for hummingbirds or her love for the Meyers' dogs.

Although the store is now in the Meyer family, it seems as though it hasn't really changed hands. Joe Milan Jr., the only living brother of the original three who ran the business, remains in Roanoke, and David Meyer stays in regular contact. The two men interact with the familiarity of family, and Milan occasionally visits the store or Meyer travels across town for a visit to Milan's home, as he did one recent morning. As Meyer arrives at the front door, Milan greets him with a thunderous "Come in! Come in!" Not one for wasting time, Milan grabs Meyer's hand and tugs him through the door, following with a curt and manly hug, then a brusque slap on the back—the kind that a father might give a son.

At 83 years old, Milan remains agile and energetic. Even as he sits comfortably in a living room chair, he seems ready to spring into action. In the world of tobacco, the Milan brothers were active indeed, and their reach extended far beyond Roanoke. From 1982 to 1992, Ellis Milan served on the board of directors of the Retail Tobacco Dealers of America. The Milan brothers developed strong relationships and friendships with industry leaders worldwide. As personal guests of Peter Stokkebye, they once traveled to Denmark to tour his facilities firsthand and experience a fast-paced tour of Danish life with Stokkebye as their personal guide.

David and Renee Meyer and Poochie Preston in front of Milan Tobacconists in downtown Roanoke, Va.

"He wouldn't leave us alone," says Joe Milan Jr. as he springs forward in his chair. "Every day, he would come to our hotel and take us somewhere. Off we'd go. He always had something planned for us."

Back in the heyday of U.S. soda fountains, Milan Bros. Tobacconists had a 24-seat fountain and grill. The shop was at the very center of town life in Roanoke, and Milan says the daily pace was furious.

"I would have breakfast at home and didn't eat again until I got back at night," Milan says. "I was busy all day. I'd go from the tobacco cellar to the tobacco counter to the soda fountain, and I'd drink coffee all day long."

Milan takes pride in his candid ways, and he was never short on candor with customers. Instead of agonizing with a customer over which pipe to buy, he would quickly size the customer up and poke a pipe in his mouth, saying, "Here. This is the pipe you want." Though the demands on his day have certainly slowed down, Milan hasn't. He still drinks plenty of coffee and moves like he does. He is eager to show that he still has his blending skills.

He hurriedly makes his way to his garage with Meyer following behind. As Meyer looks on, Milan reaches onto a worktable and clutches a dusty canister of tobacco labeled "Milan No. 1." A father-son sort of banter between Milan and Meyer ensues. The younger Meyer grouses something about the dusty canister and "how many years that old tobacco must have been sitting in the garage," adding incredulously, "You've got to be kidding, Joe." But the elder tobacconist dismisses the younger one with a wave of his hand and peers into the bowl of a pipe with demonstrative disapproval of the cake buildup. He turns away and rummages around on a worktable with his eyes and hands poking fervently about.

He suddenly emerges with the pipe in one hand and a battery-terminal cleaner in the other. Eliciting a wry smile from Meyer, Milan plunges the wiry brush of the battery-terminal cleaner into the bowl, and with five or six aggressive cranks, the cake turns to dust, tumbling out and floating into a bag of cake dust that Milan spreads around his rose beds.

As Meyer rolls his eyes with a chuckle,

David Meyer and Joe Milan Jr. enjoy a visit at Milan's Roanoke, Va., home.

he quips, "How many times have you seen a pipe reamed with a battery-terminal cleaner?"

Most pipe smokers painstakingly and slowly pinch and drizzle small bits of tobacco into their bowls—filling and tamping, filling and tamping again—but not Milan. Between his thumb and all four fingers, he scoops up some Milan No. 1 and bunches the tobacco together in front of a vertical bowl, the stem of the pipe sticking straight up. He pushes the tobacco briskly into the bowl while encircling the circumference of the chamber with his fingers, pushing as he goes. He promptly pulls a few straggling ribbons of leaf from the bowl and levels it off, even with the rim. In about five seconds, the bowl is flawlessly filled and ready to light. The entire bowl of tobacco smoked right to the heel without a tamp, without a bite, and without the help of a pipe cleaner.

Given his unusual pipe-packing technique, it's easy to see why Milan would say, "Ninety percent of people who smoke a pipe don't know how to pack a pipe. Packing it, lighting it with one match and smoking it to the bottom is an art."

As an artist, Milan is a minimalist with abstract inclinations.

Before he allows Meyer to depart, Milan returns to rummaging around on the worktable until he finds remnants of some chocolate tobacco. He weaves together a quick blend with the resurrected Milan No. 1 and stuffs it into a donation envelope, the kind you find in the backs of church pews. He sets Meyer on his way with the same boisterous charm with which he greeted his protégé.

Meyer is welcomed back to the store by staff member Alphonso "Poochie" Preston. Because of his 30 years at the shop, Preston exudes—and is part of—the Milan tradition. While still in high school, he was hired for janitorial work by Joe Milan Jr. and literally worked his way "from the ground up," as he says. He is a fixture in the store, working six days a week. He proudly points out that he has "never been late or missed a day of work in 30 years." Behind the tobacco counter, the large-framed Preston is sifting his hands tenderly through a tub of the newest original Milan blend, Jefferson Street. He watches the bits of tobacco tumble gently between his fingers and into the tub, where the mixture has been maturing. He breathes in deeply, relishing the aroma, and with a gleam of approval in his eyes, he murmurs a satisfied, "Yes. Oh, yes."

A young customer in his 20s approaches Preston and says he would like to try "something a little different." The stalwart Preston leans over the counter, towering over the young man. Without hesitation or discussion of the customer's tastes, Preston directs him to hand over his pipe and asks if it has been recently cleaned. "It's clean enough," he replies rather sheepishly. Preston skeptically peers inside the bowl and protests stridently about the pipe's condition. Although it seems a battery-terminal cleaner might have been apropos, Preston uses a traditional pipe tool to dig out old tobacco from the chamber. He pulls the stem from the pipe and quickly but thoroughly gives it a cleaning. "Now that's better," he proclaims as he reaches into the tub of Jefferson Street. He scoops up the tobacco and bunches it together in front of a vertical bowl, stem pointing straight up. In a few seconds, the bowl is full and Preston is poking the pipe into the greenhorn's mouth while lighting a match, all in what seems like a single motion. "You're going to like this," Preston commands. It's not clear whether the young smoker even tastes the tobacco before he complies with Preston's instructions, saying, "Yes, I like it. I'll take a few ounces." It was an exchange between tobacconist and customer of which Joe Milan Jr. would surely approve.

The Jefferson Street blend that Preston pressed into the young man's pipe is named after the Roanoke street on which the store sits. It is Milan Tobacconists' rendition of an English blend that has aromatic qualities and a pleasing room note. Although David Meyer handles most of the blending, he and Preston produce Jefferson Street together, and both are profoundly pleased with the results. The duo also teams up for a few of Milan's other blends, such as Sheik's Delight, which contains a hefty portion of Rovada, the rather robust—perhaps even raucous—English. Meyer prepares the closely guarded recipe for Rovada in the cellar, and Preston adds the final touches behind the counter in the main parlor. The toned-down result is Sheik's Delight. All three blends appear in the Milan Top 10 list that follows.

Meyer is always looking for an opportunity to tinker with tobacco, and if a blend isn't meeting his expectations, he won't hesitate to descend into the cellar to refine it—or reconstruct it altogether. He has taken one such blend, Flamingo Road, back into the cellar and is considering a complete revision to the recipe, perhaps to the point of renaming it. Each blend's name, he says, is a critical element in the mystique and experience of selecting a tobacco, and customers react to a mixture's moniker.

When all the factors in mixing and marketing—the flavor, pouch aroma, room note, combustion, texture, appearance and name—work effortlessly together, the result is a popular and prosperous blend. Such is the case for Rovada,

which is among the store's oldest recipes and carries one of the most mysterious monikers. It is named for Joe Milan Sr., using representative letters from the phrase Roanoke-Virginia-Daddy. Rovada is not for the tender-tongued smoker. But veterans simply must give this pungent blend an opportunity to waft about the olfactory senses with its uniquely Milanese qualities. For this reason, and because of its staying power among Milan's most time-tested mixtures, Rovada leads Milan's Top 10 list, which is as follows:

1. Rovada. A fine collection of five Virginias dominates this full-flavored mixture, which is finished generously with Latakia, Perique and toasted Cavendish. It is best savored after a bit of drying out and smoked at a humidity of about 58 percent. A drier pack will burn a bit better and will mellow—slightly—the attack of this hearty English. But don't misunderstand: Rovada's initial strike to the senses is among its most pleasurable qualities. David Meyer says, "It's got a really rich hickory, nutty flavor with a nice finish." Milan's Web site describes Rovada as "a superb, medium-strength ribbon-cut mixture, pleasing to the taste with no trace of sweetness."

2. 401 Burley Mixture. Burley devotees and tobacco purists will find this blend's pronounced tobacco flavor refreshing. For a Burley-based mixture, it has a bit of a zest, thanks to a modest dose of bright Virginia, Perique and toasted Cavendish. Blended primarily from crimp-cut, light Burleys, it has an unadulterated quality that will appeal to new smokers looking for the true taste of tobacco. Milan touts this blend as a nonaromatic, but its pleasing room note and easygoing characteristics seem to challenge that classification. Meyer uses it as a base for blending, and it performs well as a complement to other tobaccos. It also performs just fine on its own and is a must-try for bona fide Burley buffs.

3. Sportsman. Meyer says, "This is one of those blends that tastes like it smells. If you like aromatics, I recommend you try this one." It's true. From pouch to puff—and even to room note—Sportsman has a stability that is rare in pipe tobacco. If the list were ranked by room note, this one would be at the top. For a flavorful aromatic, Sportsman burns uncharacteristically well and doesn't seem prone to biting the tongue. A fire-cured Cavendish takes the lead here, along with a mature black Cavendish. Its casings of cherry, pineapple and vanilla don't seem to overpower the mixture, instead working together to ameliorate and mellow the fruity characteristics.

Milan included brothers Joe Jr., Ellis and Herbert Milan; Jean West (bottom left); and Mabel Toms, who still works at Milan today.

4. Jefferson Street. It is decidedly English, and a healthy portion of Latakia gives Jefferson Street a delightful smoky undertone. It appears that Meyer and Preston might have hit their target to produce an "English that your friends will like too." While the room note is not typical of an English, neither is it excessively aromatic. It doesn't necessarily impart the pronounced aroma typical of aromatics that nonsmokers nuzzle up to—those tobaccos that are reminiscent of poking your nose into a bag of peanuts or sniffing vanilla extract or plunging your face into the fruit bowl at Sunday brunch. Instead, the slightly sweet overtone seems to simply mellow most of the English characteristics. Unlike so many blends that try to straddle the aromatic-nonaromatic fence, Jefferson Street still tastes like an English.

5. Hillman. This one hardly has a chance to age in the cellar at Milan Tobacconists. Its richness, pleasant room note and the continuing popularity of vanilla casings make this one of Milan's fastest movers. Meyer prepares the mixture in 30-gallon tubs, and for the lover of tobacco, there's really nothing quite like lowering your head (and all your olfactory senses) into a tub brimming with a fine blend. Hillman's plentiful portion of Burley, which comes from a base of 401 Burley, makes it an easy smoke, and the flavor remains consistent throughout the bowl. Copious black Cavendish from the Milan blend Midnight rounds out the flavor. Meyer says veteran smokers tend to gravitate toward Hillman: "It burns great and has a nice, clean ash. It's pretty robust. More seasoned pipe smokers tend to smoke this. I probably wouldn't recommend it to someone who is just starting out because it might be too rich." But neophytes shouldn't wait too long before trying this. Hillman's mellow—but rich—qualities are good for a wide spectrum of smokers.

6. King's Ransom. This is one of those irresistible names. It resonates with customers looking for a blend that sounds stout—and even foreboding. They won't be disappointed in this Latakia-packed English. Unlike some Oriental blends, the abundant Latakia doesn't completely subdue the flavor and soften all the edges. The name "King's Ransom" is one that Meyer resurrected from Milan's files to develop a new blend: "I took the name," he says, "and recreated a new English blend. Of all our English blends, it's got the most Latakia. It's got a spicy, nutty flavor, similar to [that of] Rovada, but sweeter on the finish." Meyer says this is a favorite among longtime pipe smokers "who like a lot of Latakia."

7. Our London Dock. Fans of Lon-

More Milan Tobacco Blends

101 Burley
Unlike 401 Burley, this is an aromatic and "has more course-cut burleys than 401," Meyer says. "Very few people smoke this straight, but it's a nice component for a custom blend."

205 Cavendish
See description within Tahiti in Top 10.

Appalachian Gold
This ultra-aromatic black Cavendish has a super room note because of its chocolate and vanilla confections.

Black Gold
This is another aromatic black Cavendish, but with the addition of Burley and bright flake.

Centennial
Red Virginias and black Cavendish serve as the base for this aromatic cherry blend.

Flamingo Road
Under revision, this dark and light Cavendish blend may emerge under a new name.

Joe's Blend
See description within Sheik's Delight in Top 10.

Lucky 7
"For someone who wants something a little richer than a mild aromatic, this would be a good one," says Meyer. This is a mid-strength, aromatic Cavendish with a vanilla casing.

Midnight
True to its name, this is solid black Cavendish, also with a vanilla casing.

Milan No. 1
See description within Milan No. 2 in Top 10.

My Finest Kind
Meyer says, "This one is similar to Lucky 7 with similar components and a dark Maduro."

Old Dominion
Rough-cut Burleys dominate this blend, to which a maple casing is added.

Our Captain Black
Like the original, it is a good all-day smoke, blended from Virginias, Burleys, and toasted Cavendish.

Sultan's Blend
Meyer is on a never-ending search for an English with an easygoing room note, and this one has a hefty dose of Cavendish to mellow the aroma.

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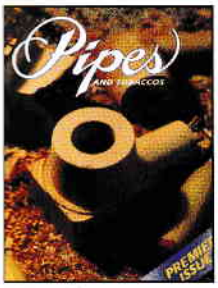
don Dock, originally made by Middleton, will be delighted to find a Milan rendition of the old blend among the store's offerings. Smokers have found that Milan's variation, which came only after a long process of refining the recipe repeatedly, is true to the original mixture. As with other Milan blends, Meyer may let a few customers try a bowl to help fine-tune the finished product, but he won't unveil it until he's confident it's ready for the market: "It took us two years, but we feel we've created the closest thing to the original, and in many cases our customers think it's even better." London Dock is an English blend of Burley, Turkish and Perique with a buttered rum casing, and it burns clean with a light-gray-to-white ash.

8. Sheik's Delight. This is one of only two original blends billed as "Turkish" by Milan Tobacconists. Joe's Blend is the other, and both are worth a try. With Rovada for its base, Sheik's Delight has a full-flavored body but a less conspicuous attack at the match than Rovada. On its Web site, Milan calls Sheik's Delight "a medium-strength Turkish, Latakia blend that burns slowly with a soft taste." Joe's Blend has the least Latakia among the English blends under the Milan name, and Meyer recommends it to smokers who "want to try an English but have never had an English before. Instead of overpowering them with one of the stronger tobaccos, we recommend this." Milan's Web site says Sheik's Delight is "excellent for the smoker who likes a hint of Latakia without the heavy aftertaste."

9. Milan No. 2. Milan No. 2 is blended from African, Turkish and Virginia tobaccos with a hint of Latakia. Among all of Milan's blends, Peter Stokkebye's influence is probably most evident here (and in Milan No. 1, though it is now under revision). Milan No. 1 and Milan No. 2, Meyer says, "are light English blends with a lot of Cavendish and vanilla, which gives them a mild taste. But because of the Latakia, you get a little bit of that smoky, nutty flavor. This would be a good choice for someone who wants to try Latakia but really likes the aromatics." These are a bit reminiscent of Stokkebye's lighter English offerings, such as English Luxury, though the Milan blends are a bit heartier and less sweet.

10. Tahiti. Aromatic enthusiasts have been flocking to the tropical blends that have steadily emerged over the last several years. Milan's contribution to the category is as good as they get, due in part to Meyer's restraint with the coconut casing. Smoking many other tropical-style mixtures offers an experience that is akin to sitting under a coconut tree and being clocked on the head repeatedly by falling furry spheres. Some tropical tobaccos are so full of coconut casing that they taste like those dried, shaved coconut flakes used in German chocolate cakes—but not Tahiti. A base of Milan's 205 Cavendish blend helps ease the impact of the coconut. The 205 Cavendish includes Burley, Dutch, Virginia ribbon and a little Perique with "no heavily flavored tobacco in it," says Meyer. "So it's going to be more like smoking a natural tobacco." Meyer's judicious restraint keeps Tahiti from sailing too far over the great, blue Pacific and makes it a mellow, cool-smoking blend.

In an age when so many tobacconists have outsourced their own house blends, Milan keeps tradition alive and refined. Of the 50 blends that carry the Milan Tobacconists name, 24 are crafted on-site in Roanoke. While Meyer and Preston continue their quest for new, enticing blends, they keep a loyal watch over Milan's long-standing original recipes. It is an ageless spring that runs through the tobacco cellar beneath Milan Tobacconists, and the tradition of this storied shop appears equally timeless. ***P&T***



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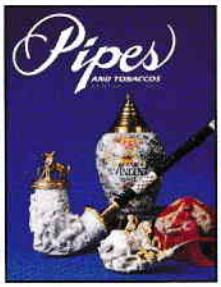

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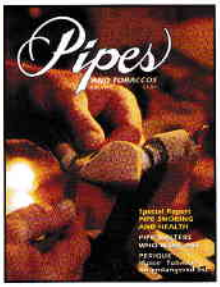

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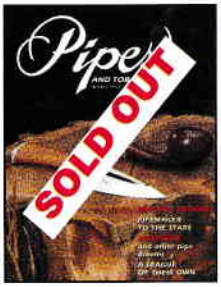

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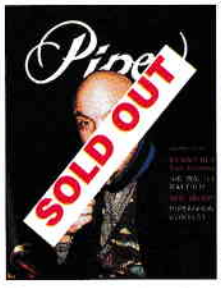

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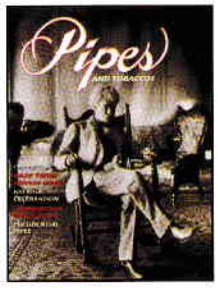

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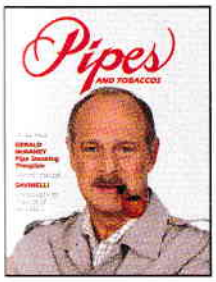

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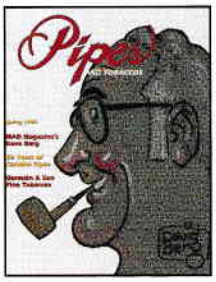

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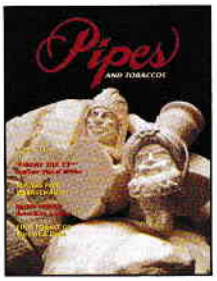

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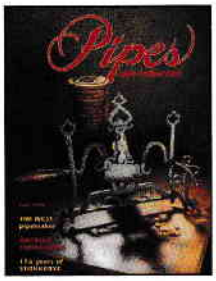

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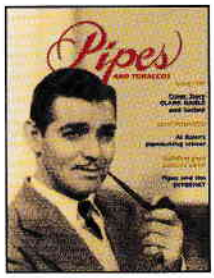

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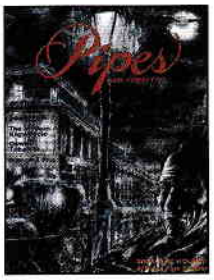

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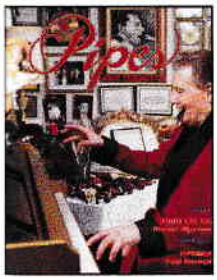

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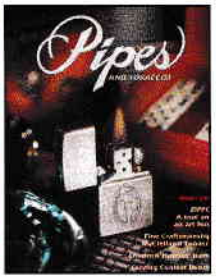

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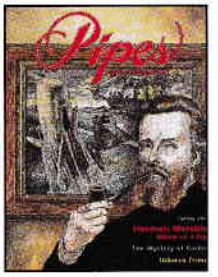

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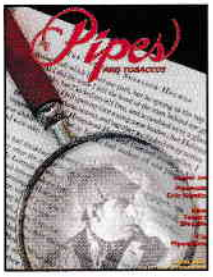

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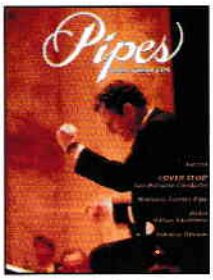

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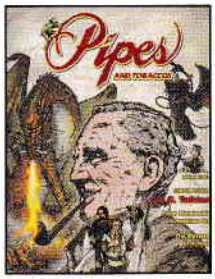

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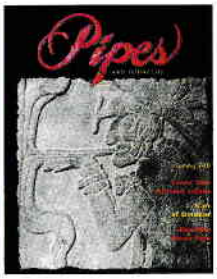

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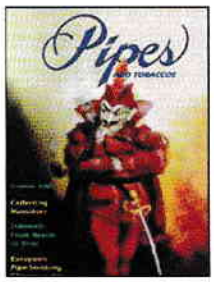

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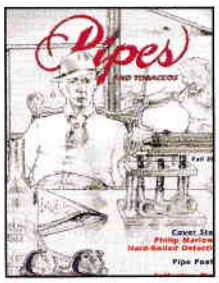

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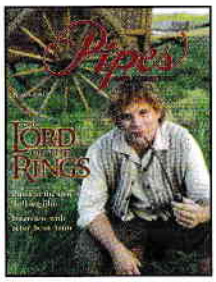

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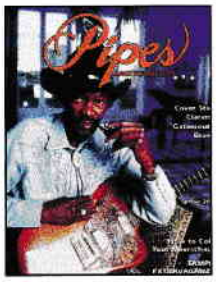

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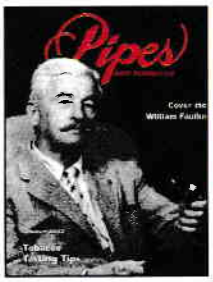

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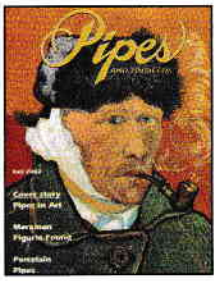

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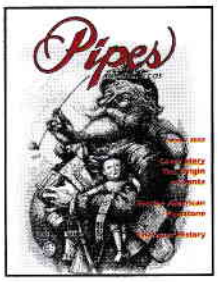

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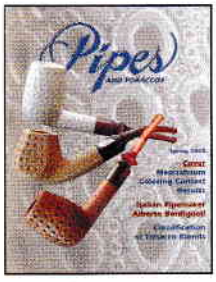

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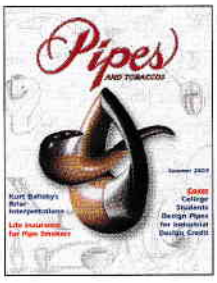

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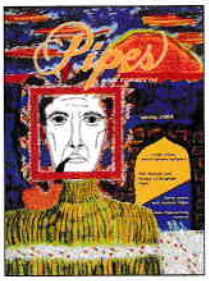

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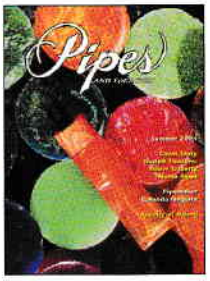

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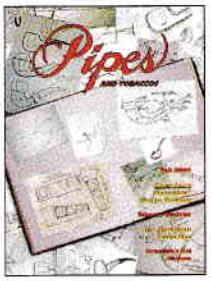

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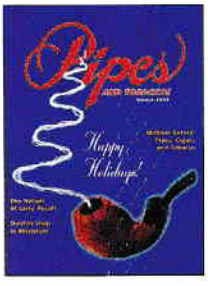

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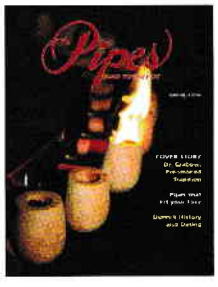

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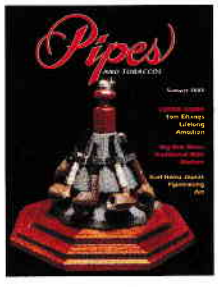

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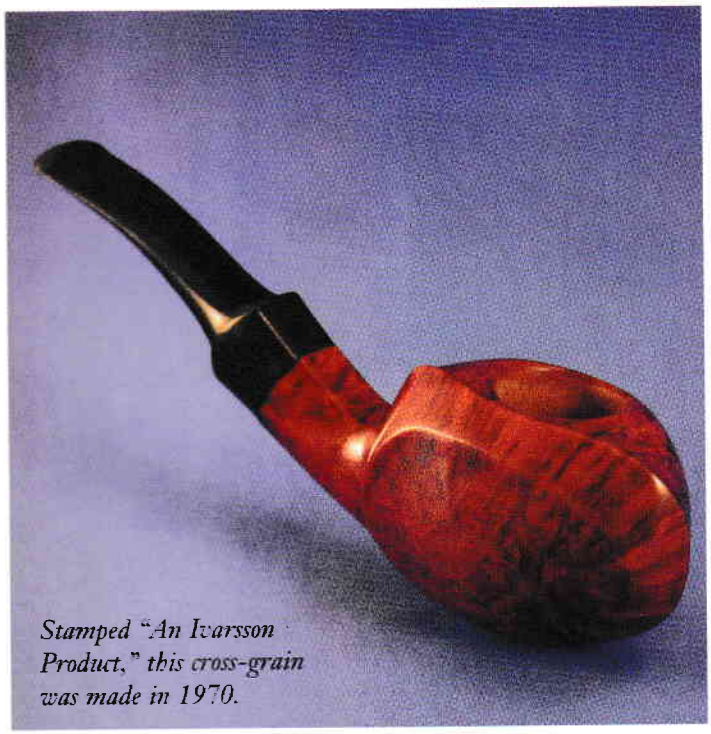
The Strange Tale of the Blowfish

by Robert A. Schrire

The influence of Danish-inspired pipe shapes is widely recognized, and few shapes are held in higher esteem than the "blowfish." Pipes described as blowfish are regularly seen in magazines and pipe catalogs, and on Web and auction sites, where they are much in demand.

I therefore anticipated few problems when I contacted Jess Chonowitsch to ask him to make me a blowfish. "Refresh my memory—what shape exactly do you want?" was his reply. I was even more taken aback when I approached Lars Ivarsson, widely credited with being the originator of the shape, and received the identical response! This confusion is very widespread, as was confirmed by Jorg Lehmann, a knowledgeable high-grade pipe collector, who recounted his own experiences in trying to get German pipemaker Wolfgang Becker to make him a blowfish. He explained the shape he wanted and was amazed when Becker responded that the shape was in fact *not* a blowfish.

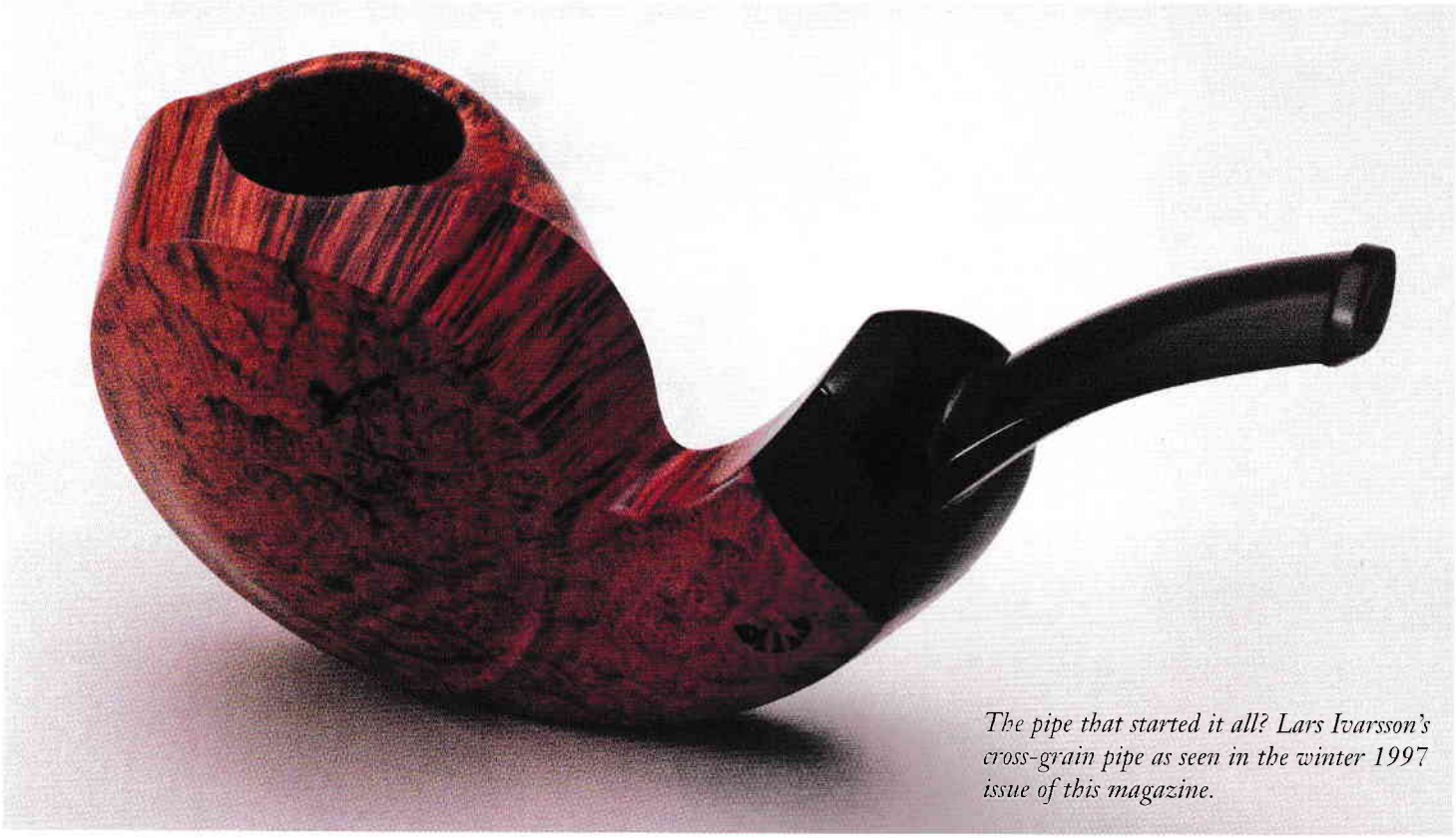


Stamped "An Ivarsson Product," this cross-grain was made in 1970.

So we have a good deal of confusion: at least two very different shapes are both popularly called blowfish, yet Ivarsson and Chonowitsch, the pipemakers most identified in the public mind with these designs, are themselves uncertain what customers mean when they request a blowfish. More investigation was obviously called for.

After lengthy discussions with many leading pipemakers, retailers and serious collectors, I think I have finally been able to reconstruct the developments that produced this confusion. And *Pipes and tobaccos* magazine has a starring role in the whole saga!

The most credible version of the blowfish story begins in the late 1960s, when Sixten and Lars Ivarsson, along with Jess Chonowitsch, worked together under Sixten's guidance in a studio in central Copenhagen. From the age of 12, Lars had been helping his father repair and polish pipes, and now as a mature pipemaker in his own right, he was trying to move beyond Sixten's shapes and develop his own style. One of his earliest attempts produced a cross-grain pipe. Lars cut the briar not in the conventional way, which would show the grain on the sides of the bowl, but across



The pipe that started it all? Lars Ivarsson's cross-grain pipe as seen in the winter 1997 issue of this magazine.

the grain, which produced a brilliant bird's eye pattern along the bowl's sides and straight grain along the top and bottom of the stem. Lars was, of course, not the first to create this unusual grain pattern—some Dunhills from 1915 have it. And several other Danish designers were producing pipes that took advantage of cutting the briar across the grain. But Lars was the first to design a complex and subtle shape that maximized the beauty of the grain. The pipe was unusual not only because of the grain pattern but because it was also asymmetrical, with one side of the bowl flat like a discus while the other was slightly rounded.

His earliest model was sold to Iwan Ries in 1967 or 1968 and was included in their annual catalogue. Elaine Levi, the wife of the owner, called it bird's-eyes supreme. It sold very quickly and Lars had many requests to make more of these shapes. The popularity of the design, although still modest, encouraged other pipemakers, including Former and Jess Chonowitsch, to make their own versions, and the shape became generally known as a cross-grain.

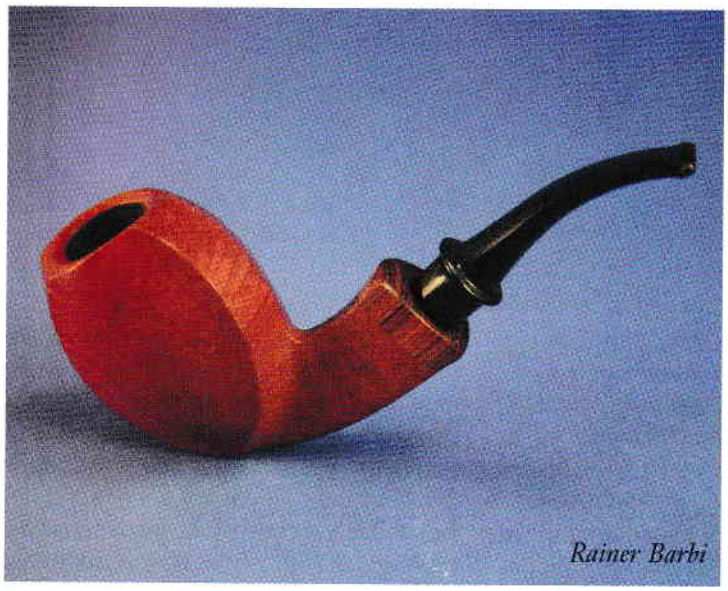
There are, however, other versions of this story. Some observers with knowledge of the early days claim that it was Sixten himself who made the first cross-grain and maintain that early catalogs contain his version. Lars, however, insists that although the design came from the Ivarsson studio, Sixten himself never made a cross-grain pipe. This assertion is supported by Tokutomi, who also studied under Sixten and who today is famous for his own cross-grain variations. He recalls that throughout his time in the Ivarsson studio he never saw Sixten making this design.

To determine who made the first cross-grain is further complicated by the practice followed by Sixten of labelling any top-quality pipe from his studio, be it made by himself, Lars or Chonowitsch, simply as an "Ivarsson product." It seems therefore that in a field of big egos and short memories, we may never have an uncontested account of the origin of the shape. In addition, with few exceptions, such as Nordh's ballerina, most pipe shapes evolve over time and have many parents. Catalogs from the '50s and early '60s show several pipes that have some resemblance to today's cross-grain. Almost all would agree, however, that the modern shape emerged from the Ivarsson studio, and we have no grounds to dispute Lars' claim that he was the first to develop it.

A few years later, in about 1971, Lars Ivarsson and Jorn Micke, another of the modern giants of pipe design, simultaneously and independently came up with a new shape consciously based upon blowfish they had seen in aquariums. Micke travelled frequently to Japan, where his pipes were highly prized, and had seen the fish there, where it is very popular. Lars had not yet visited Japan but received a blowfish for a birthday present and kept it in a bowl at his home. He designed a shape that captured the fish's fins and silhouette when about to lunge at a snail, its favorite food. The shape emerged in part unconsciously and in part by design.

Is it not remarkable and indicative of the power of the blowfish image that two pipemakers would independently be influenced by the same fish and come up with very similar designs? Micke in fact actually called his new shape "Fugu," the Japanese word for blowfish. This is almost certainly the first time that a pipe shape was so described. Lars, although making a similar shape, did not give it a name because, as he explains, "I never call my pipe models anything." Lars thus deliberately avoids seeking catchy names for his designs and leaves that task to others. The result was that the cross-grain and blowfish, two very powerful new shapes, were never given explicit names by their primary creator. This contrasts markedly with a carver like Bo Nordh, who takes great pride in giving his designs dramatic names, such as

S. Bang


Rainer Barbi

Ramses and sphinx.

Lars' attitude toward his own work clearly created the potential for future confusions in nomenclature. This confusion was compounded by his friend Jess Chonowitsch who, influenced by Lars, made his own variations of both the cross-grain and blowfish designs and called his version of the blowfish his "museum" pipe because one was bought for display in the New York Museum of Modern Art.

The market for all these pipes was of course very small. When Iwan Ries stopped importing Ivarsson and Chonowitsch pipes into the United States in the late 1970s, Americans in large part dropped out of the Danish pipe market, which became dominated by the Germans, Italians and Japanese. Thus neither of these designs was generally known to Americans at that time. The big breakthrough into the American market came in the 1990s, when Uptown's reintroduced high-grade Danish pipes to the American market. Many observers were amazed at the speed with which the American market took off, and Nordic high-grade pipes were quickly restored to their place at the pinnacle of pipe collecting.

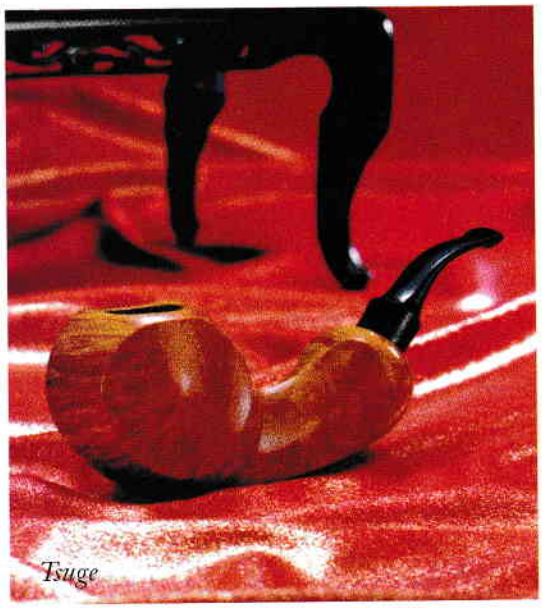
The growth in this market was reflected in the stories covered by *Pipes and tobaccos* magazine. The cover story on Lars Ivarsson published in Winter 1997 was particularly influential because it introduced the general public to the blowfish. Indeed, Lars believes that this was the first time the term blowfish was used in print to describe a pipe shape. The article reported that Lars became aware of how a blowfish bends its tail sharply to one side when it prepares to attack a snail. Suddenly he realized that "it was the shape of a pipe; or, conversely, a pipe could be made in the shape of a fish." It is also clear—and Lars confirms—that the shape he was referring to in the article was the Micke/Lars design. However, the photograph accompanying the article was not of a blowfish but of a cross-grain pipe with the somewhat ambiguous description: "Its shape brings to mind the image of the blowfish, tail cocked, ready to attack." To complicate matters even further, the pipe illustrated had a fish stamp, which is only used for the highest-quality Ivarsson, regardless of shape.

Many readers of the article reached the erroneous but not unreasonable conclusion that the pipe illustrated was the blowfish-inspired design discussed by Lars in the interview. And as noted earlier, Lars' unwillingness to name his own designs made confusion possible, even probable. In addition, few people know what a real blowfish looks like. The Lars version has an elongated body and well-developed fins and lives in fresh water. The general view of a blowfish, however, is of a marine animal that is circular in shape with minimal tail or fins. The bladder or puffer fish, which inflates its body into a round ball when threatened, is what many people think of when they visualize

Lars Ivarsson

Paolo Becker

Bo Nordh



Tsuge

The original Lars Ivarsson blowfish

a blowfish. So we may indeed have two very different types of blowfish. However, such is the power of the image created by the idea of a blowfish that although the term was used in print for the very first time a mere eight years ago, to most of us it seems that we have known the shape and the name forever.

However, the confusion may have its positive side. Thomas Looker, a knowledgeable student of pipe shapes, has perceptively noted that the original cross-grain shape is a dramatic design in search of an appropriate name. The term *blowfish* fits the bill despite its historical and possibly biological inaccuracies. To call the shape bird's-eyes supreme seems more suited to a new kind of candy. The term cross-grain itself provides no clue to the actual design, only the cut of the briar. Virtually any shape could be cut cross-grain. The crux of the issue is that an unusual and dramatic shape was waiting for an appropriate name—and *P&T* may have inadvertently provided it.

Following the publication of the article, many readers saw the picture of the beautiful Lars cross-grain shape and inundated pipemakers with requests to make them a "blowfish." Even today that image has stuck in the minds of most members of the pipe community. Significantly, however, the major pipe retailers have retained the original names. Rene Wagner, the exclusive supplier of Lars and Jess pipes in Europe, is very careful to distinguish between cross-grains and blowfish pipes and follows the original terminology. In the United States, Uptown's, the largest seller of high-grade Nordic pipes, reserves the blowfish descriptor for the original Micke/Lars design but rather confusingly calls cross-grain shapes the "discus."

THE SHAPES

Although the cross-grain and blowfish shapes are very different, they have one very important similarity: They are both asymmetrical. In the past a pipe with uneven sides and thickness of bowl was considered the ultimate sign of poor pipemaking. The Ivarssons turned this "weakness" into strength because it gave them increased freedom to improvise.

The original blowfish was a large bent pipe with flattened shank, reflecting the image of the fish's tail and fins. Although it demands considerable pipemaking skill to complete effectively, it does not lend itself to great improvisation. As a result, the examples made by Lars and Jess are very similar, although each craftsman has

photos by Jan Zeman (zemanpipes.com)

photos by Tom Looker

developed his own unique touches. Interestingly, few other pipemakers have copied the design. The cross-grain, on the other hand, has spawned a legion of supporters, including S. Bang, Bo Nordh, Former, Knudsen and, perhaps most notably, the Japanese carver Tokutomi. Indeed, they have created an entire family of cross-grain-inspired shapes that has transformed the shape in new and exciting directions. This certainly reflects the creative potential inherent in the original design, which is a virtual invitation to creativity, with infinite possibilities to vary the degree of asymmetries, the angle of the sides and the length of the stem, possibilities not present in the original blowfish design.

History cannot be rewritten. Had Lars given his two designs clear and consistent names, the confusion would never have arisen. Had Lars contacted *P&T* after the publication of his interview to clarify the issue, confusion may have been avoided. But that is not Lars' way.

So we are likely to be stuck with the present confusion. Thomas Looker has made the excellent suggestion that we should call the Lars/Micke design "fish" to reflect its origin and style, and stick with "blowfish" for the original cross-grain. Ultimately, however, it will be the consumers who will determine how the market resolves the paradox of two very different shapes sharing a common name. Whatever that choice, the blowfish has won a permanent place in the affection of lovers of fine pipes throughout the world. ***P&T***

Disney Pipe Collection

Smoking is no longer permitted in Disney theme parks, except for designated outside areas, but some of the pipes and tobacco of the Disney smoking era still survive in a unique collection

by Chuck Stanion

Remember when you could smoke in public? When you could go to a restaurant or walk through a shopping mall smoking your pipe? Things have changed quite a bit in a very few years, but it's nice to reminisce about those days when smoking was an accepted pastime. Most of us even remember when the Disney theme parks had tobacconist shops. There were tobacco blends with Disney logos and pipes stamped with the Disney name, and you could wander freely down Main Street smoking your Disney pipes and tobacco. Those days are gone now, but Brian Levine remembers them very clearly and has spent the last few years building a tobacciana collection around the Disney theme.

Levine is specialty products manager at Peter Stokkebye International, a company name you may recognize for its many fine pipe tobaccos. His decision to collect Disney pipes sprang not only from his links to the tobacco industry, but to the Disneyland theme park, where he worked while in college. He started at Disney in 1986 as a train conducter on Walt's revered Disneyland Railroad. "I later also became a bus driver, I drove the fire truck, the omnibus and I worked in the parking lot."

He could easily have stayed on at Disney full time after college and was tempted to do so. "But it was a 45-mile drive each way," he says. "I loved the job, but I decided that marriage and a real career had to come first." He loves what he's doing now, too, but believes one day he'll again find himself where he started. "Some day I'll end up back there, working for Disney as an 80-year-old guy, handing out maps or whatever."

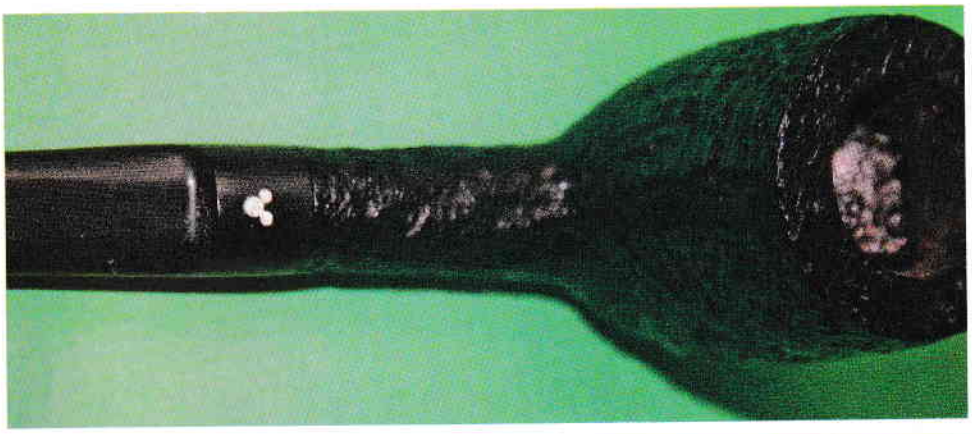
Brian Levine on the job at Disneyland in 1988, posing on the Disney fire truck with his future wife, Dale.

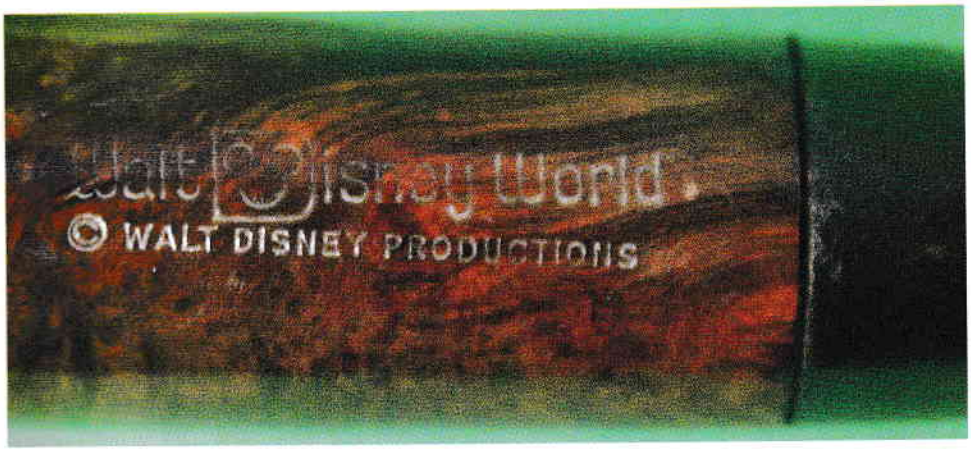
The first pipe Levine ever smoked was a Disney pipe. "I remember buying a corncob pipe at Walt Disney World in January of 1988, and it had "WDW" stamped on it. For the life of me I don't know where that pipe went; it must have been thrown away. But that was the first time I ever smoked a pipe. I'm pretty sure I bought a pouch of Prince Albert cherry or something like that. I bought it at the tobacco shop on Main Street and went back to my hotel room and thought I was really cool and smoked it a couple of times."

It didn't occur to him for some time that he might have some fun collecting Disney pipes. He saw a Disney briar at a pipe show a couple of years later and found it interesting. "I didn't buy it, though. It was only $10, $20, whatever, but I didn't buy it. Still, it kind of stuck in my mind because I'm such a Disney fan." Later still, while browsing pipes on eBay, he noticed a couple more Disney pipes. "I think I may have thought briefly that they would be neat to have. But I didn't actually acquire one until I bought a group of several old estate pipes and there happened to be a couple of Disney pipes in the lot."

Because of his job with Stokkebye, Levine attends many pipe shows, and because he's a marketing professional, he realized he could attract much more attention to his tobacco displays if he had some sort of hook, some interesting type of pipe collection to get people's attention. But the pipe collections at major pipe shows are impressive indeed, and he would require something extraordinary. "I needed to have some nice pipes to go along with the high quality of the tobacco I sell," says Levine, "but I couldn't afford to collect straight-grain, handmade artisan pipes." He had always been open about his opinion regarding the investment of large sums for the collection of pipes. He appreciates beautiful pipes and owns many, but the pursuit of a full-blown collection dedicated to one maker, style, shape, finish or other theme was not only beyond his financial grasp, but it injured his practical sensibilities.

So he started thinking about the Disney pipes that had been intriguing him almost subliminally for so long. "I thought it would be interesting to combine two loves: my fond memories of my former job at Disney, and my love for pipes and tobacco. I knew that for $5 or $10 each I could start collecting Disney pipes, so I put the word out to a couple of estate buyers and sellers and people I knew at shows, and I watched eBay pretty regularly, and by the Chicago show in 2003 my collection was already at 18 pipes." For a while he pursued all things pertaining to tobacco and Disney, including cigar bands, ashtrays and matchbooks. "Then the collection started to snowball, and I realized I had to focus on just pipes and pipe tobacco or it would get out of hand. Now I have 45 pipes and I've readjusted the collection so that I no longer look for cigar items." He's always looking for pipe-related items, though. "I would love to add a Disney-logo pipe tamper. I don't know if they made them, but knowing Disney in





the '70s and '80s, I'd be willing to bet they put their logo on a tamper, and some day, one will show up."

The pipe Levine personally likes most in his collection is the sandblasted black billiard that has partially burned tobacco in its bowl in the accompanying photo. The tobacco remnants are from a bowl that he smoked in that pipe on Main Street at Disney World earlier this year—an infraction of current Disney regulations. "It's the only pipe I have with the complete Mickey logo inlaid on the stem," says Levine. However, the most valuable piece in his collection is a full, unopened can of Disneyland tobacco. "It was the most expensive piece I've found so far. I couldn't tell you what year it's from, but it's probably from the '60s because it's got a knife lid top. It could be from any of several manufacturers. It's a tin similar to what Carter Hall and Half and Half used to come in, and it may be a tobacco something like that, but there are no stamps or markings to indicate the manufacturer."

Information is surprisingly difficult to come by. "I contacted the Disney company twice," says Levine, "asking questions and looking for resources. One thing I've been looking for is a picture of Walt smoking a pipe. They said the archives are so extensive that finding something like that would be impractical, but if I had more general questions they could be more help. It was a very nice, standardized response. The other thing I asked was the exact closing dates of the tobacco shops. They didn't have the exact dates but they provided an approximation."

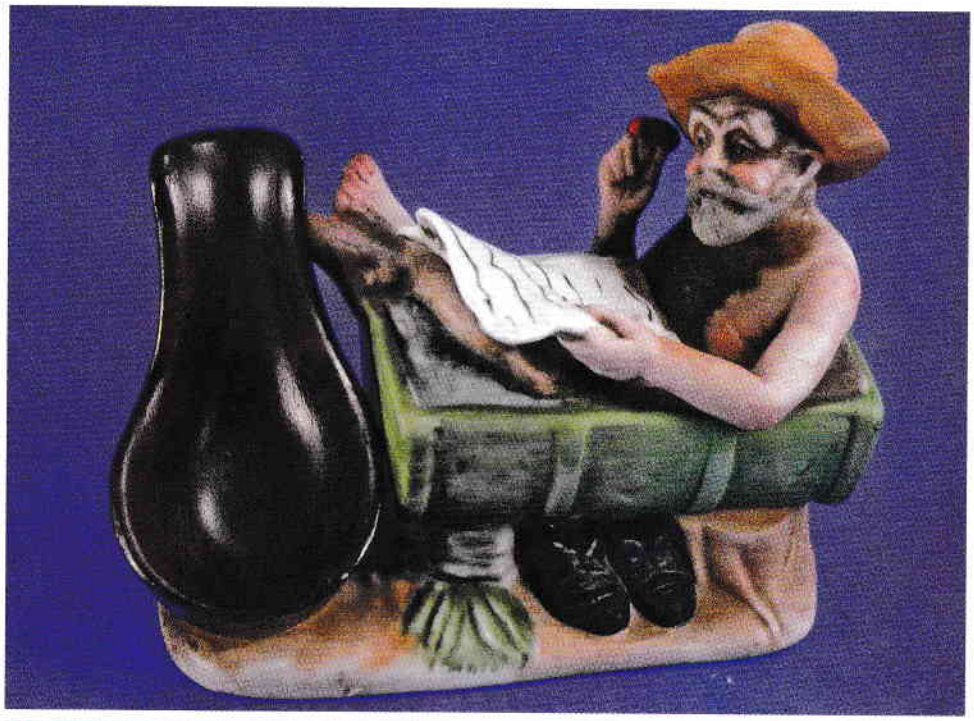
Levine admits that he still has much research to do, but he is confident that some of the Disney pipes were made by Cadogan, the parent company for GBD, Barling and Comoy. "There are some post-transition Barling shapes and some Comoy shapes," says Levine. "But other companies must have participated too. There are some Charatan shape numbers, and there are some Edwards Algerian Briar stamps. I also have two Ropp cherrywood Disney pipes. There is still a lot to find out; this is just a fun sideline for me. I've been looking for photos of the tobacco shop on Main

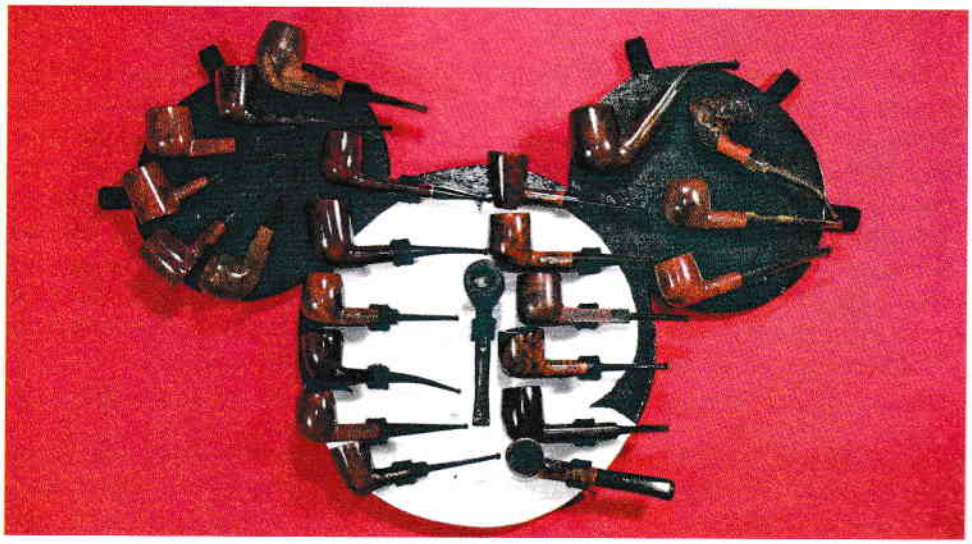
Street. I'd like to have interior and exterior photos for display. Those pictures would all be pre-1989. The last tobacco shop was in Florida in '89; the one in California went out in '88. All tobacco in the Disney parks went under the counter in 1993. Tobacco products were no longer sold at all beginning in '99, and now there are no tobacco products in any Disney-owned establishments, except I'm not sure about the hotels. There are no longer Disney matchbooks. They've gone full circle from having private-label Disney pipes, tobacco, cigarettes and cigars to completely shutting it all out."

The only pipes you can find at Disney now are part of the backdrops. "The 'Carousel of Progress,'" says Levine, "has a pipe in it. It's in the 1940s era, where the father sits with what looks like a Peterson system pipe. Also, I believe it's in 'Pinocchio's Daring Journey,' at Disneyland, there's a shot of Jiminy Cricket with a pipe, or with a pipe near him. And on the 'Alice in Wonderland' ride, the Caterpiller, of course, is smoking a hookah, and a couple of pirates have pipes in "Pirates of the Caribbean."

Levine says his collection is really a comment on the social nature of smoking at this time in history. "These items were freely sold in the most popular theme parks in the world, and now they are not. I started the collection as a way to combine two passions and to sort of snub the high-end stuff. I didn't intend for it to turn into anything substantial, but as I started to work at it, and as people started to be excited about it, I looked at the political nature of collection. It's really a political commentary about what has happened in our society in the past 18 years. We've changed, and not for the better." ***P&T***

If you wish to share Disney information with Brian Levine, especially regarding the Main Street tobacconists from either theme park or anything about the history of the pipes and tobaccos sold at Disney properties, he may be reached at 877.605.1577 or brian@pstokkebye.com.





Lena "Jungfru" Isberg

Master Carver of Motala

By Ben Rapaport

Photography by Sarunas Peckus and Darius Peckus

Wood has been an essential building material in Nordic countries, instrumental in making many of their arts and crafts, including pipes. Relative to England, France, Germany, Italy and even the United States, however, Scandinavia does not have a historically lengthy briar-pipemaking legacy. Moreover, not much had been chronicled on this side of the pond about that region's pipecarvers, but all that's recently changed. Nowadays, just about every pipe smoker would agree that some truly outstanding pipemakers reside on the Scandinavian Peninsula, and several recent issues of *Pipes and tobaccos* have contained articles singing their praises.

Some may be familiar with the work of a few Norwegians, among them Bård Hansen and G. Larsen. Mention Björn (Bengtsson), Bo Nordh, or the newest briar wunderkind, Love Geiger, and some avid pipe aficionado might chime in: "Those Swedes make really great smoking pipes!" Just refer to Jess Chonowitsch, Bjarne (Nielsen), or the late W. Ø. "Øle" Larsen—or any of a number of other Danish master craftsmen—to a group of American pipe devotees, and broad smiles immediately appear. To fanatic Danophiles, Anne-Julie is not just the widow of pipemaking legend Poul Rasmussen and a respected painter; she also has a reputation for crafting handsome briars. Another, much-less-known female carver was Else Larsen, who passed away in 1997 and who, according to Jakob Groth, was Denmark's first female pipemaker. From information that Søren Refbjerg Rasmussen recently provided to the author, Else began as a housecleaner for Øle Larsen in 1963 and showed a degree of talent for making pipes. She eventually opened "Else's Pipe Repair Shop" behind Øle's establishment and began making some pipes, but she was more noted for her repairs and for fabricating those stylistic Larsen horn and amber pipe tampers. Anne-Julie and Else Larsen are anomalies in a trade dominated by men, but they are not the only female pipecarvers from Scandinavia who have ever had a retinue of admirers! This brief account is proof.

Female pipecarvers are not a 20th-century phenomenon. Two who lived in the mid- to late 19th century, Carla Nielsen (probably Danish) and Maddalena Bianchi of Venice, have received slight mention in the annals of pipe history, but the record is absent significant details about them, such as the mediums in which they worked or how productive they were. In my recollection of legendary pipe masters, the lives of only two 19th-century carvers have been profiled in a book: a brief account about a French meerschaum artisan, Charles Harnisch of France, and a biography-cum-retrospective catalog of a contemporary, Sophia Isberg of Sweden, who is the central character of this account.[1]

Much more is known about Isberg than either Nielsen or Bianchi, but one would not think so by poring through a very popular book on Swedish woodcrafts and craftsmen. *Looking Through Carving and Whittling: The Swedish Style* (1998), authored by Gert Ljungberg and Inger A. Son-Ljungberg, offers a perspective on the distinctively traditional look of Scan-

[1] B. Clergeot, *Charles Harnisch, Artisan Pipier, 1845-1895* (Musée du Tabac, Ville de Bergerac, 1985), and *Jungfrau Isberg – och hennes verk* (Motala Musei—och Hembygdsförening, 1993), a lushly illustrated, 36-page hardcover book that can be ordered from the Motala Museum's Web site.

dinavian woodcraft—such as bowls, clogs, tableware, letter openers, manglers (to iron sheets) and other household objects—with commentary about some prominent Swedish artisans, but nary a word about Sophia Isberg! However, more than 100 years ago, she was the tobacco "talk of the town" on the Scandinavian Peninsula. Idolized by some of her countrymen, lionized by others as one of the finest 19th-century Swedish artisans, she is known in the United States to less than a handful of pipe collectors. Therefore, it is fitting that she be recognized in this magazine; after all, she was a pipecarver, and this magazine's charge is to give visibility to just such individuals, regardless of country of origin, gender or era in which they plied their trade.

According to her biography, *Jungfru Isberg – och hennes verk* (*Jungfrau Isberg and her work*), Helena (Lena) Sophia "Jungfru" Isberg was born in 1819, the daughter of a wood-carver, Johan, and his wife, Magdalena. When she was 11, she and her older brother, Jacob, both self-taught, began whittling and making toys for their own amusement. By age 19, she was expert enough to apply her talents to carving urns, tableware, goblets, clocks, napkin rings, tobacco boxes, snuffboxes ... and pipes. Using some rudimentary tools, many of which she, her brother, or her father may have hand-forged, she ventured into executing more elaborate, ornate and intricate objects for the home and the smoker.

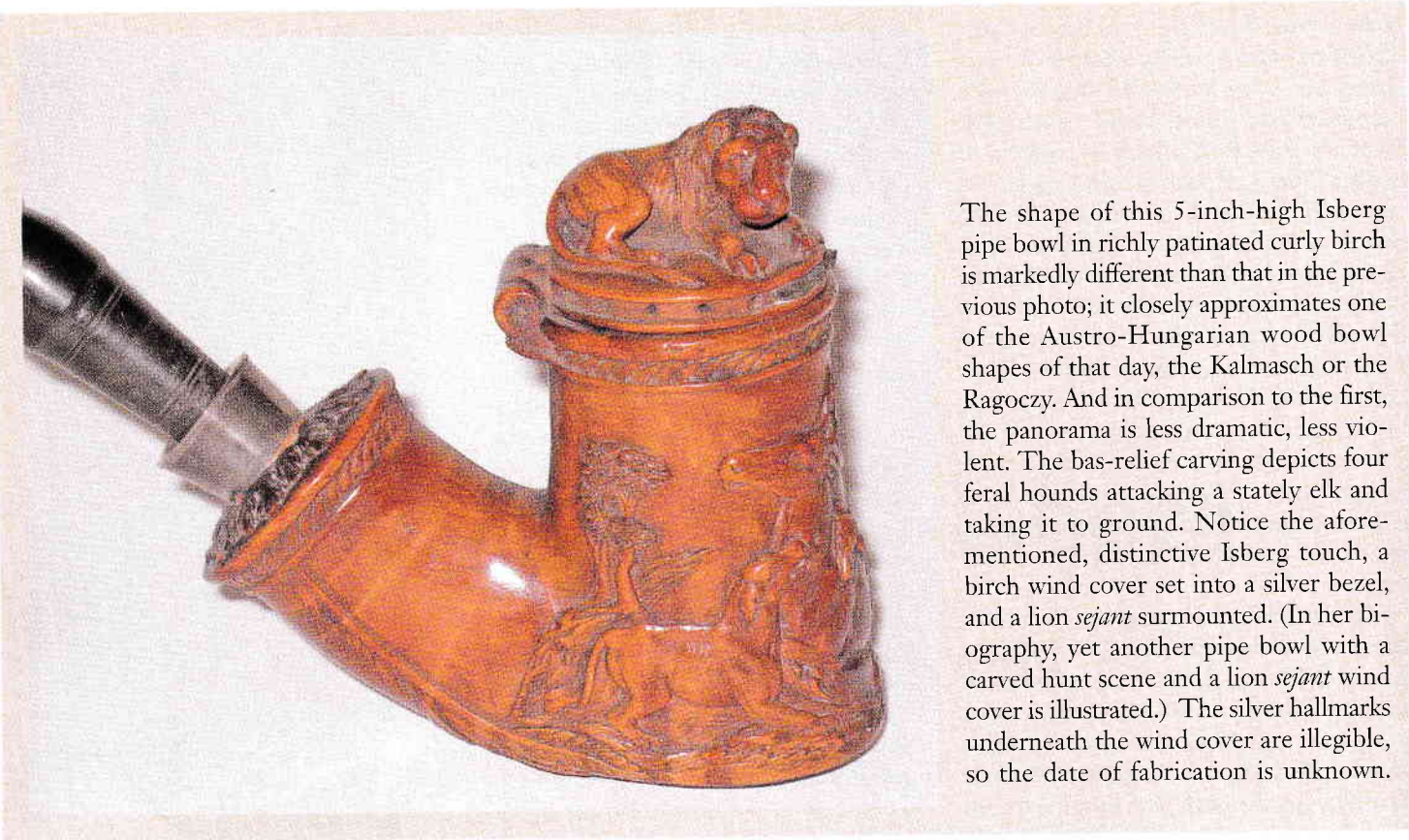
In 1847, Isberg was still relatively unknown in her rural hometown of Motala, but a certain Otto Mörner took one of her pipes to a wood-carvers' convention in Stockholm, and it received a bronze medal (third prize) for its "unusual artistic talent." Rather than pursue formal art classes at the invitation of Professor Carl Gustaf Qvamström of Sweden's Academy of Arts, she remained in Motala, content to carve in the confines of her living room. Shy, reserved, perhaps even a bit eccentric, Isberg not only declined Qvamström's financial support, but when King Karl XV desired to meet her, she is quoted as having retorted: "If he has something to say, he has to come here."

Inspired by the bronze medal, she believed that her work might also be well-received outside Sweden, so she ventured out frequently to compete at various international expositions on the Continent. She exhibited two pipes at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1855, one depicting Sweden's King Gustavus II Adolphus (1594-1632) leading his army into Germany, and the other depicting Napoleon's victory train, identified as "Napoleon's Triumph." She received a medal at London's International Exhibition in 1862 and first prize at an exhibition in Malmö in 1865 for her skill and diligent workmanship, at last getting recognition as one of the finest wood-carvers of the period.

This 26-inch-long, commemorative maple *Gesteckpfeife* (German term for a wood pipe in parts [bowl, reservoir, stem and mouthpiece]) has an ornately carved 6-inch-high bowl exhibiting on the upper half a deeply incised, in-the-round, pitched battle scene in which three flags of Sweden are prominent, and an acanthus-leaf décor on the lower half. The reservoir below the bowl is formed as a high-relief-carved spread eagle clutching a wild hare in its talons. The entire length of the two-part stem is carved in acanthus-leaf décor matching that on the bowl, with alternating embellishment of grape leaves and floral buds. A silver retaining chain connects the reservoir to the stem. The wind cover may typify one of Isberg's signature trademarks, a high-relief-carved finial of a lion *sejant*, and the wind cover's silver mount strikes are three crowns (the Swedish national mark), "S.P.U." (a maker's mark), and "A5" (which equates to 1855 in the Swedish dating code). (This same battle image is replicated on an Isberg tobacco jar in the Motala Museum, Sweden.)

No one knows for sure, but it is possible that this scene may represent King Gustavus II Adolphus (whose country was constantly at war) leading his men at the Battle at Breitenfelt (alternately Breitenfeld), north of Leipzig, in 1631, where he won a spectacular victory over the Empire's Imperial Army. More likely, because of the panoramic detail in portraying such fierce, close fighting, it might be a depiction of the Battle of Lützen (Saxony) in 1632, one of the most decisive battles of the Thirty Years' War, where the king died. Taking into account the silver hallmark "A5" (1855) under the wind cover, one could conclude that this pipe was one of the two aforementioned pipes displayed at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris that very year.

For those steeped in the history of the briar pipe, it is no surprise that this wood was not her medium; after all, la bruyère's popularity was in its infancy in the mid-19th century. She worked in maple to execute small pipes and in birch for the larger, more dramatic expressions. Although her pipes may not have passed today's taste test, they certainly passed the tactility test for their splendor in the deeply incised motifs she created from a kaleidoscope of models and images she found in fables, mythology, the Bible, history, magazines, newspapers and the everyday life in Motala to which she was exposed. Gods, sovereigns, lovers, knights, war heroes, the venerated in the Bible and hunts were her typical milieu. She particularly enjoyed making pipes exhibiting figural heads and busts, and one of her favorites was the aforementioned Napoleon, whose bust she often carved. In



The shape of this 5-inch-high Isberg pipe bowl in richly patinated curly birch is markedly different than that in the previous photo; it closely approximates one of the Austro-Hungarian wood bowl shapes of that day, the Kalmasch or the Ragoczy. And in comparison to the first, the panorama is less dramatic, less violent. The bas-relief carving depicts four feral hounds attacking a stately elk and taking it to ground. Notice the aforementioned, distinctive Isberg touch, a birch wind cover set into a silver bezel, and a lion *sejant* surmounted. (In her biography, yet another pipe bowl with a carved hunt scene and a lion *sejant* wind cover is illustrated.) The silver hallmarks underneath the wind cover are illegible, so the date of fabrication is unknown.

her finished birch and maple pipes, one can easily distinguish the beauty and dexterity of her carving and her significant talent for detail—she invested hundreds of hours to create masterpieces—which justly warrant prominence and attention from anyone who admires excellence in the execution of wood objects by a deft hand.

There is no formal record of how many pipes Isberg carved in her lifetime or what was her best or largest pipe, but we are fortunate that Dr. Sarunas "Sharkey" Peckus, an American with an extensive antique pipe collection, owns one pipe, purchased in Toronto, and one pipe bowl, purchased in Seattle, that showcase her dexterity. The curator of the Motala Museum has authenticated both as the distinctive work of Isberg.

It is a rare opportunity when an Isberg pipe comes to market, but word rapidly circulated in late fall 2004 that a relatively plain birch pipe bowl with a silver wind-cover and shank collar, a long cherrywood and flexible-horsehair stem, and a horn mouthpiece would be offered at an auction hosted by A. F. Hellman, Uppsala, Sweden on Nov. 20, 2004. The catalog estimate for this simple pipe was 2,000 Swedish kroner (approximately $275 at the time), and the winning bid climbed to SEK9,000, or about $1,200, suggesting that Dr. Peckus is not the lone admirer of Isberg's workmanship in wood.

She died in 1875, almost as poor at that age as when she had entered life 56 years earlier. The Motala Museum, situated in the castle of Charlottenborg, Sweden, two kilometers east of the city of Motala, chose to immortalize her. In 1930, the museum published a retrospective catalog of her work in which the following statement is found: "Many stand in amazement and wonderment before her finesse with the treatment of wood." Today, the upper floor of this museum contains some of her most important artifacts, exquisitely executed examples of her diligence and attention to detail.

Few pipemakers of equivalent talent then or now are famous enough to have this level of posterity or their craft center stage for perpetuity. Let the record show that not only was Helena (Lena) Sophia "Jungfru" Isberg one of the very first 19th-century female pipecarvers, but also that she plied her trade at a time when Scandinavian pipemaking was not as mature an industry as that of other European countries to its south and west. Many famous and not-so-famous people have had their special moments, but they were most often only moments. As history now relates, Isberg is probably the only European pipecarver to date whose reputation lives on by virtue of the printed word: a biography—better, a portfolio of her life's work, which is limited to those who read Swedish—and a permanent museum display for the entire world to see. ***P&T***

This story evolved over several years and from communications with a number of people who are publicly credited with the germination of the idea to write it. It started with the book about Sophia Isberg that Jan Andersson of Tyringe, Sweden, a lifeslong pipe smoker and editor of *Rökringar*, the journal of the Svenska Pipklubben, had gifted me in the late 1990s. Sometime in 2003, I told Bruce Benjamin, an American antique pipe collector, about this book, and he obtained a copy in early 2004 from his daughter in Sweden. While attending the Chicagoland Pipe Collectors Club convention in May 2004, Bruce visited his friend, Dr. "Sharkey" Peckus, took pictures of these two pipes and sent them to his daughter. She showed them to the Motala Museum's curator, who certified their provenance to Isberg. Without all these interrelated events, this story could not have be told.

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TOWNSMAN CAVENDISH-BLACK WESSEX
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AND MORE

Richard Laymon:
Celebrated Horror Writer and . . . Publisher of a Magazine for Pipe Smokers?

By Eugene Umberger

Richard Laymon's big break as an author came in 1970 with the publication of his short story "Desert Pickup" in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. As he remembers in *A Writer's Tale* (Deadline Press, 1998), "I went crazy wild with joy." In 1980 he published his first novel, *The Cellar*. Eight years later, *Science Fiction Chronicle* named *Flesh* Best Horror Novel of 1988. This novel, his 1989 novel *Funland* and a short-story collection, *A Good, Secret Place* (1993), were all nominated for the Bram Stoker Award, created by the Horror Writers Association.

In 2000 he was elected president of the Horror Writers of America, only one year prior to his untimely death at the age of 54. He finally won the Stoker award for *The Traveling Vampire Show* (2000), an honor posthumously accepted by his daughter. Laymon had written some 30 novels and more than 60 short stories. Although at the time of his death he enjoyed well-established fame in England, he was just beginning to gain a long-deserved recognition in his own country. But his foray into tobacco publishing, not his reputation as a horror writer, is the subject of this article.

This story goes back to 1972, when I was serving with the U.S. Army in Brunssum, Netherlands. I had recently discovered *The Pipe Smoker's Ephemeris*, published by Tom Dunn. One of the features of this periodical is the excerpting of letters from Tom's correspondents. I, in turn, began to correspond with one of them, Bob Barnett of Louisville, Ky. Somewhere I spotted a reference to a pipe newsletter and I enlisted Bob's aid in searching out information on this publication. He was fairly certain that it was *Smokers' Blend*. On Dec. 15, 1972, he wrote, "The copy of Vol. 1, No. 4 of 'Smokers' Blend' comes with the compliments of Ken Kramer [of the Louisville institution Kremer's Smoke Shoppe]. This is the last copy of the magazine and the publisher is now defunct."

Now hot on the trail, I wrote to the publisher, Richard Laymon, in Santa Monica, Calif., inquiring about the availability of back issues. On Feb. 2, 1973, he typed the following response:

> Dear Sgt. Umberger:
> Thank you for your letter of December 30. Sorry I took so long in answering. I was in the process, however, of deciding whether or not to continue publishing SMOKERS' BLEND. Since I work full-time, go to school at night, and am a writer of fiction, I finally decided to stop producing SB.
>
> I know that there are quite a few pipe nuts around. I'm one myself. It seems a shame that there is no regular publication for their benefit. I've made two attempts at it. The first time, I went all-out, trying to make an expensive product to be sold from counters of pipe shops. Well, they didn't sell. I lost a lot of money. Second time around, I started with a list of those who were subscribers to the first issues. I produced it cheaply, first with a ditto machine and then by stencil. That way, I didn't lose much money. But I had a difficult time increasing circulation. In spite of the fact that there are many pipe nuts around, they seem pretty hard to dig up.
>
> Enclosed are copies of all the issues of SB, with the exception of No. 4, which you already have and which I don't. They're on the house. . . .
>
> Best wishes,
> Dick Laymon
> [signed in pencil]

From Venice, Calif., he sent the first three issues of *Smokers' Blend* and the three of its successor publication, *Smokers' Blend II*.

Laymon included extracts from the writings of various authors, such as Mark Twain and Kenneth Grahame, and contributed his own advice on such topics as "Buying a New Pipe." (An example: "The purchase of a new pipe should be looked upon philosophically. That philosophy is hedonism. Buy the pipe which is likely to give you the greatest amount of pleasure.") Stephen Joseph Brutosky did the artwork for the publication, including the front-cover illustration of Mark Twain smoking a pipe.

Each issue also contained recurring sections: "Tinder Advice" (his response to readers' questions), "Hot Tips" (tips from readers about smoking), and "Humor Door." The latter is self-explanatory, and a sampling will suffice to give the flavor of that section: "This month's Humor Door proverb—You can't have your cake and ream it too"; "Tilly prefers her men like

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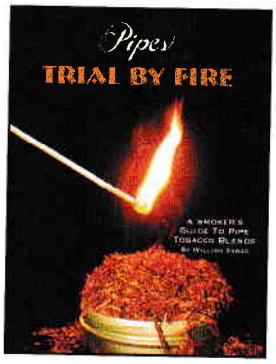

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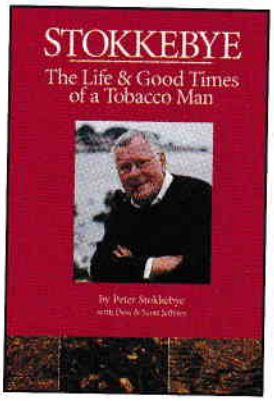

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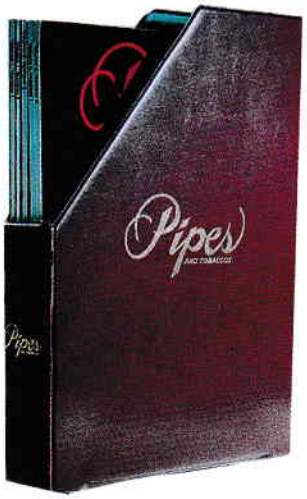

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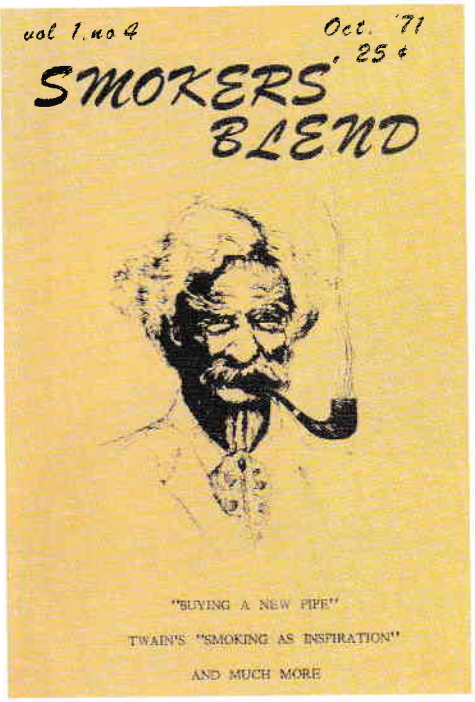

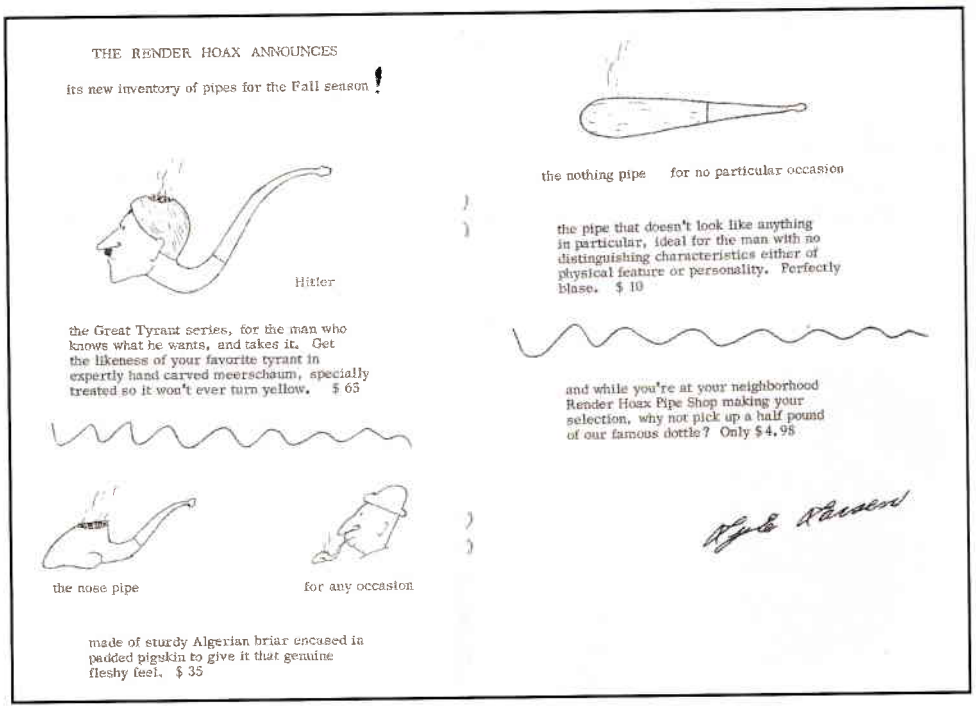
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tobacco—fresh and burley, without much bright"; and "As the old saying goes, 'An apple a day keeps the doctor away.' But so does a Dublin, or billiard, or bulldog." Laymon was also fond of limericks:

Billy Belch, whose manners were crusted,
Liked to puff on his pipe while he lusted.
Warned the girl at his place,
"Take that outa my face
Or more than your briar'll get busted."

Well, horror writing, not humor, was to become his forte.

The first issue featured an article on the calabash pipe, "The Pipe that Nobody Smokes—in Public." Following a comment about the ease with which one can smoke to the bottom of a calabash bowl, this limerick is found:

I once had a neighbor named Nash
Who purchased a new calabash
He smoked it a while
With a widening smile . . .
When he dumped it he found only ash.

In the third issue, Laymon made his own heartfelt contribution to the poetry of smoke:

My Bulldog Briar

There was many a night I sat alone
By the light of a mesquite fire,
When my only friends were
a dog named Ben
And a full-bent bulldog briar.

I used to sit and dream a lot,
And scheme of things to come
'Til the wind did blow and
the fire burnt low
And my stern end went numb.

Then we'd stretch a bit
and douse the fire,
Me and my old hound Ben.
He'd watch me as I'd fill my pipe
Again, and then turn in.

I used to lie awake awhile
To hear the midnight calm
And watch the ash of my bulldog briar
Glow red on my open palm.

Well, that was all a while ago
And some of my schemes came through.
But now and then, spite of everything,
I get to feeling blue.

When I feel that way, I stand on my feet
And hunt down the bulldog briar.
I light her up and remember Ben
And our nights by the mesquite fire.

The final issue of *Smokers' Blend* contained a feature, Lyle Larsen's "The Render Hoax Announces," which could possibly provide inspiration for someone entering a future *P&T* Design/Carving Contest. As Dr. Larsen recalled in a July 22, 2004, e-mail to this author, commenting on the title: "It is a takeoff on 'The Tinder Box Announces.' This was the pipe shop on Santa Monica Blvd. and about Third Street in Santa Monica. That, as I recall, is where I met Richard and where he told me about his magazine. I had a different title for the magazine piece, but Richard used his editorial prerogative and changed it. I remember that I liked my title better, thinking 'Render Hoax' a bit obscure for those not familiar with the local pipe shop, but I don't recollect now what my title was."

The very first issue of *Smokers' Blend* mentioned that subscribers should save their copies because an index would be made available in Vol. 1, No. 12! Sadly, it never made it beyond issue No. 4 for October 1971. This was not exactly the end of the story, because the following year, Laymon published a successor, *Smokers' Blend, Too.* This failed even more quickly, only making it to issue No. 3. As noted in the letter cited earlier, the first issue of this reincarnation of *Smokers' Blend* was produced on a ditto machine and the next and final two issues, slightly retitled as *Smokers' Blend II*, were produced by stencil.

Laymon was well aware that his subscribers would pick up on the changed format and cautioned that "the original SB, by comparison, was somewhat like a good briar. Attractive, expensive. SBT is more like a corncob. Simple, cheap. But it will burn the same brand of tobacco as the briar, and maybe even add some aroma of its own." Gone, however, were the recurring sections offered in the original publication; this second try relied

more on reprinted material. Charitably, it was a pale reflection of the initial effort and one simply suspects that his heart was no longer in it.

Collectors of Richard Laymon's work probably have not seen this tobacco periodical. It should not be entirely unknown to them, though, as Laymon briefly mentions it in his autobiographical *A Writer's Tale*. In one section he gives a chronology of his life. Under "1971," he says that "at the end of my first year of teaching at Bishop Conaty, I resigned to publish a pamphlet called *Smoker's* [sic] *Blend*, which I thought would be sold by the thousands to pipe smokers and make me rich. It didn't. I published four monthly issues (July-Sept., 1971) before going out of business. The issues contain articles, tips, and jokes for pipe smokers—mostly written by me." And further, under "1972," he writes, "in October and November, I published *Smoker's* [sic] *Blend II*, two follow-up issues of my original periodical." Owning a complete run of the periodical, thanks to Richard Laymon himself, I know that the fourth issue of *Smokers' Blend* was published in October 1971 and that he produced a third issue, in December 1972, of *Smokers' Blend II*.

As to Laymon's own smoking habits, there are just a few references in *A Writer's Tale*. In the early 1970s he became a member of the Pink Tea, a private group of writers whose "existence was something of a secret. There was only one way to attend a meeting: you had to be invited by the person who would be hosting it. After the first meeting, you didn't necessarily get invited to another." As it turned out, Laymon kept getting invited back and became for all intents and purposes a permanent member. As he recounted, "We were mostly a pack of hard drinkers and heavy smokers. (My smoke of choice was the pipe, but there were plenty of cigarettes and cigars.)" By 1991, however, his life's chronology reveals the following: "Oct. 28—After smoking a pipe since about the age of sixteen, I gave it up. For a while, I thought I might not be able to write without smoking a pipe, but I managed."

Laymon wrote at least one story in which tobacco figured prominently. "A Good Cigar is a Smoke" first appeared in the February 1976 issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (later reprinted in *A Good, Secret Place: A Collection of Stories by Richard Laymon*, Deadline Press, 1983) and typifies his macabre sense of humor and the surprise twist at the end of many of his short stories.

Late in 2002 I had reason to check back through my run of *Smokers' Blend* and thought it might be interesting to run a search on Google for Laymon's name to see if I could find out what became of him. What turned up was information about a noted horror writer who, sadly, had passed away barely two years prior to my search. For various reasons I thought this Laymon might also be the author of the tobacco periodical that had sat in my files for 30 years. The Internet led me to his book *A Writer's Tale*, which, given the foregoing, obviously confirmed his authorship.

But for his untimely death, I would have written to him about his long-ago venture into publishing a periodical for pipe smokers and his kindness in sending me his back issues. Now knowing of his willingness to correspond via the Internet with fans of his work, I believe that he would have responded and been amused, even pleased, that his earlier publishing effort would finally receive a bit of recognition in a current magazine for pipe smokers, the quality and success of which he hardly could have imagined when he started his own very modest journal. ***P&T***

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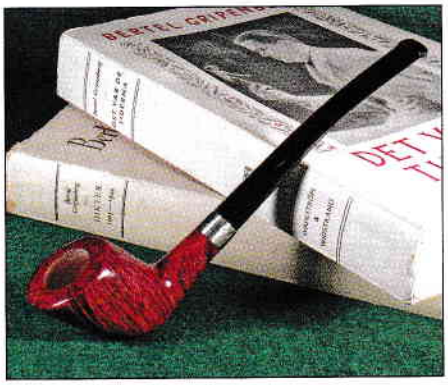

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TRIAL BY FIRE

by William Serad and Tad Gage

Introduction

Some of us, those perhaps calendar-challenged and endowed with years, remember the Wilke Pipe Shop. It was founded in 1872 in New York by the Wilke sisters and was well-known and highly regarded by all who ventured to the Big Apple. I came to know the shop in the early 1970s when it had a satellite, strangely enough, in John Wanamaker's department store in Philadelphia. Wanamaker's, at the time, was very much like Harrod's in London: huge, elegant and possessing of quite a pipe department (and still possessing the world's largest pipe organ), which just happened to be Wilke's. This was managed by Steve Johnson, a noted pipemaker in his own right, who pointed me in so many right directions, I cannot even recall them all now. I still have my Wilke pipes, small and well-used at this point but among my favorites. They were sweet-smoking from day one, and I urge you to explore the remaining store that Pipeworks and Wilke have because they don't make 'em anymore (they're 50 years old or more at this point! Algerian briar, many, so what are you waiting for?). Note that Wilke didn't much subscribe to the modern obsessions (360-degree straight grain, etc.). They were merely engineered and lovingly made to deliver as perfect a smoke as possible every time.

But we are here to talk of the leaf, and what leaf they have! If you are a Burley fan, these blends exemplify the expert use of that leaf. I think this is where they shine. Latakia abounds as well. There are some straight Virginias, but you will have to explore those on your own, as we are not treating them here. Perique fans will be disappointed, for there is precious

little of that precious condiment found in the Wilke catalog. They are no slouches in the aromatic department, and many feel that their aromatics are their crowning achievements. You judge, but there is something for almost all tastes.

—William Serad

This venerable pipe shop has been making tobacco blends for a very long time and has developed some intriguing and different mixtures. Several of the blends date back to the 1800s. While not new by any means, Pipeworks blends may be new to many smokers, as they were to me.

The ingredients used are of overall high quality, and the blends are obviously created with great care and considerable thought. Many of the Wilke blends incorporate Burley tobacco, often in creative ways. Pipeworks must have access to some of the best Burley around. Pipeworks' Burley is not just a lightly nutty binder but a key flavor component. It appears that Pipeworks employs a couple of different types of Burley leaf, judging from the varying leaf color and character. Several of the blends incorporate Burley cube.

Pipeworks also employs what I consider to be one of the finest toasted Black Cavendish tobaccos I've encountered. It's present in many of the mixtures. Even if you don't like Cavendish, this nonaromatic version of the tobacco will be an eye-opener.

One thing common to all Pipeworks mixtures, English or aromatic, is that some type of unflavored humectant seems to be used to maintain moisture content. The tobacco doesn't dry out but sticks together when pinched firmly between the fingers. The humectant is probably a plus in keeping the blends fresh for an extended period of time, since Pipeworks tobaccos are sold loose, rather than in tins. While worth mentioning the apparent presence of a humectant, I would say that in the end, it seems to have no impact on the taste or smoking characteristics of the blends.

—Tad Gage ▶

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Bestmake

Serad: A recipe from their beginnings, Bestmake is blended from Virginia, Burleys, unflavored black Cavendish and quite a hit of Latakia. I would call this an American blend because of the Burley, not an English mixture. This is very chunky and broad cut, with a variety of colors tending toward the darker end. The pouch aroma is heady and makes you want to sniff for a while, and there may be some light casing, but that is not apparent at the match. It lights easily and burns exceptionally well, as one may expect from the fine Burleys employed. I would characterize the smoke as typically Burley with varying accompaniment. Cool, rich and classically American, I would highly recommend Bestmake. I liked it best in a larger pipe.

Gage: This blend takes the usual English mixture and turns it on its head to create a mixture that's familiar, yet different. Visually, the light and dark flecks are typical of an English blend and the aroma in the pouch is rich with Latakia. However, if your expectations at this point were for a typical English smoke, you'd be wrong. Instead of Oriental or Turkish tobaccos and Virginia, Bestmake uses high-quality Burley. The flavor reflects the dry and earthy quality of Burley, rather than the tangy pungency of Turkish leaf. The mixture appears to have at least two different types of Burley—possibly a brighter flue-cured and a darker, more aged leaf. To supplement the Latakia, an uncased (nonaromatic) Black Cavendish is used. It's very rare to find a blend that employs natural, unflavored Black Cavendish. This was a subtle condiment, and it added a dark, almost leathery character. The blend was complex and satisfying from first lighting to last puff. It was very good in both meerschaum and briar, although briar brought out the blend's best. The subtle differences in flavor by including these unusual ingredients make this a mixture worth seeking out for any fancier of English-style blends.

High Hat

Serad: Another treasure from the 1870s, High Hat consists of Syrian Latakia, Kentucky Burley, Perique and golden Virginia. The cut is both short and fine, making for an interesting and easy-to-pack texture. The pouch aroma is arrestingly rich, nearly pungent. At the match, it is a bit spicy, cool and exceptionally rich, round and complex. There are notes of sweetness that come and go. There is really not too much Latakia, and as Syrian goes, this was not very Syrian to me, which would make it more woody and smoky. It didn't seem to matter what size or shape bowl, it always performed admirably, though as I age, I prefer smaller pipes. This was so tasty that every time I had a bowl, I immediately wanted another. Highly recommended.

Gage: This is an attractive-looking English mixture ranging in color from lemon yellow Virginia to black Latakia. Typical of Pipeworks blends, it features a mix of ribbon-cut leaf and slightly chunkier cuts that facilitate smooth and even burning. The slightly varied flavor bursts caused by these different sizes of leaf add a great deal of taste interest to many Pipeworks blends. Formulated in the 1870s, this mixture uses Burley and Perique in addition to the bright Virginia and Latakia. On lighting, it has a definite flue-cured Virginia twang that tweaks the sinuses. I found it best to establish the charring light, take a few puffs, then let the pipe rest for five or ten minutes. This seemed to give the Virginia a chance to calm down. Even with the high sugar content of bright Virginia, there was no sweetness. It produced a generous smoke volume with a slight and very pleasant olive oil undertone, which was not due to smoking the blend in oil-cured pipes! The Virginia ribbon gets hot very quickly, so this blend requires slow and judicious smoking. As with Bestmake, the use of fine Burley tobacco makes this an attractive adventure for anyone who enjoys English blends.

Pipemaker's Choice

Serad: This is a blend developed by Elliott Nachwalter for his pipe shop. Noteworthy Virginias are bolstered by a blend of Cavendishes and finished with not a little Latakia. There are no Orientals (other than the Latakia), so this is not a Scottish-type blend. I thought this a very fine blend for a wide audience of tastes. It is cool, despite ingredients that could make it incendiary, and flavorful, with a constant line of sweetness enhancing the Latakia. The absence of Burley in its usual presentation makes this lighter in character than most of the other blends herein reviewed. I think that one could enjoy this at various times of the day, from first pipe to last. This may sound like Dunhill's 965 to some degree, but the absence of Orientals and a lighter hand with the Latakia make it something quite different. Very pleasing and recommended.

Gage: This is basically a lightly aromatic version of a classic Balkan blend. It delivers a combination of mild Latakia flavor and moderately cased Black Cavendish. Unlike some of the Danish versions of aromatic English mixtures, the saucing does not overpower the predominantly English character of the blend. Pipemaker's Choice smokes smooth. The aromatic quality counters the usual pungent room aroma of Latakia, making it a good way to enjoy an English blend around those who don't appreciate the full power of a typical Latakia mixture.

Royal Scott

Serad: Dare I use the overused term "unique" to describe this? This blend is more than 100 years old, and it is an aromatic in the ancient sense of the word. Unlike modern aromatics, which are generally black, leaving residue on your fingers after packing, pleasing to those around you but not your palate and of poor underlying leaf, this is imbued with biological aromatic agents along the same lines as the Lake District flakes but with that American twist. They are not so overwhelming here, rather delicate in fact, and the leaf is plugged Virginia, North Carolina and Burley in a middling cut and length. The leaf presents itself as a mélange while puffing, nothing poking out at any given moment, and tastes like a lightly cased example of the leaf itself. That is to say, it tastes like good tobacco. The room note is very pleasing indeed, though don't expect compliments these days. I fear that this is one of those love-

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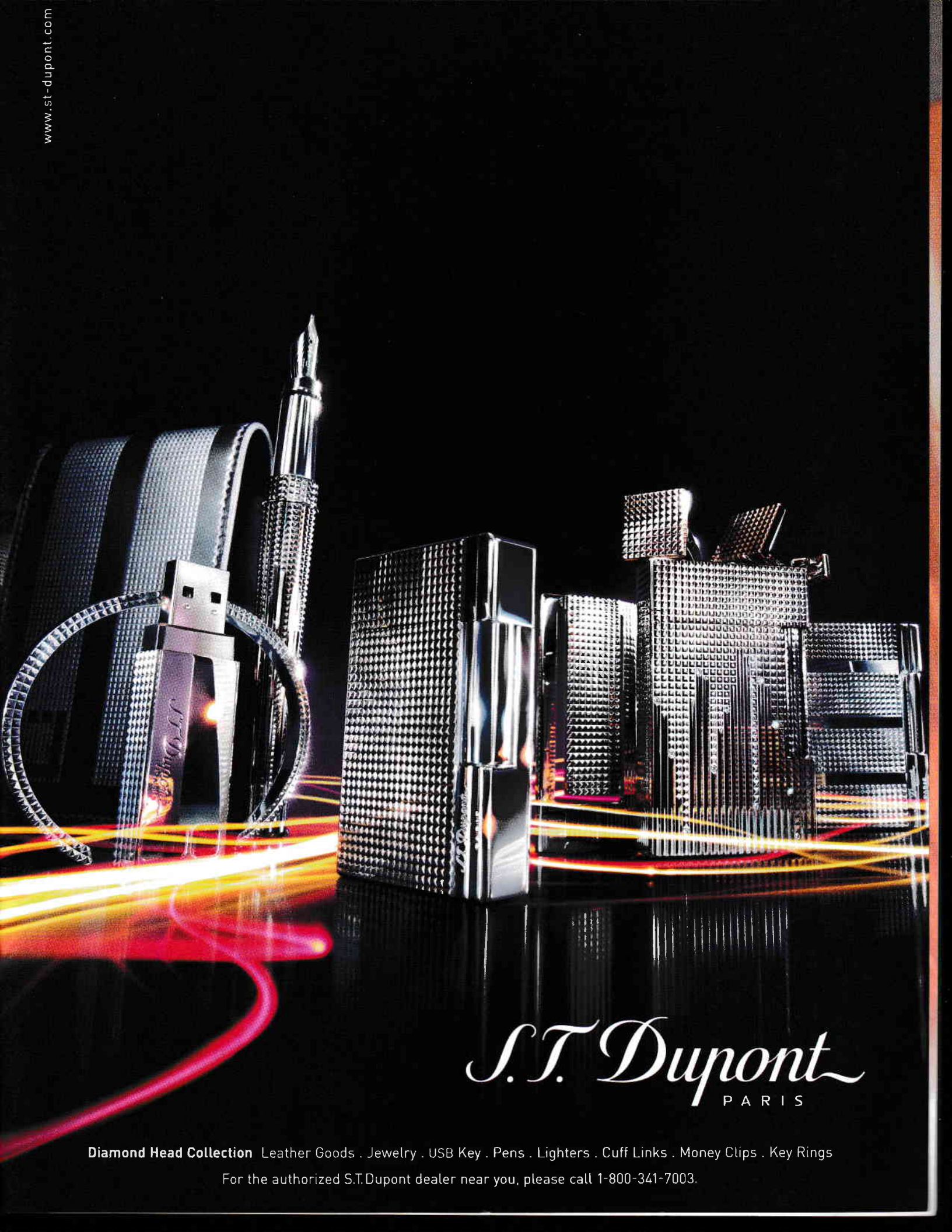

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it-or-hate-it blends, but it falls into the must-try category. It really is unique and very suitable for blending with a number of objectives in mind. As such, I recommend it.

Gage: This Burley-based aromatic blend is touted by Pipeworks as a 100-year-old formula with a secret flavoring ingredient. In addition to Burley, it features some Virginia tobaccos, although I found them to be almost unnoticeable. The mixture seemed overly moist in the pouch yet burned pretty well during several bowlfuls. I couldn't identify the secret ingredient, but it added a spicy characteristic. I could see this being enjoyed by someone who really enjoys aromatics, but I found little about it to interest me.

Vermont Maple Cavendish

Serad: A fermented black Cavendish base is enhanced with Virginias and Carolina leaf, then topped with Vermont maple syrup. Don't think that this is yet another same old thing. The flavor is sweet, needless to say, but the flavoring is unusual and not deep or low, like most maple things. Rather, the sugars of the maple come through, and there are lots of high notes. Undeniably maple, the room note is wonderful, but it is not hot as I anticipated it would be. It burns fairly cleanly in the pipe and is thoroughly enjoyable with no real negatives. Recommended to the aromatic smoker, but I liked the 191 better.

Gage: If ever a company had the right to use maple syrup in a tobacco blend, it would be Vermont-based Pipeworks. This is a visually enticing blend, with lots of color coming from excellent base tobaccos, such as bright yellow Virginia leaf and dark Cavendish. Upon lighting, it's quickly apparent that the Cavendish is of an extremely high grade. It's not goopy, nor is it bitter or cloying. The pronounced maple syrup aroma in the pouch is very apparent in the smoking as well. This natural flavoring is used carefully, delivering sweetness and flavor without overpowering the excellent leaf. An ingredient with such a high sugar content as maple syrup could burn hot, but this mixture is very cool and slow-burning. Even so, slow smoking avoids heating up the pipe and brings out the maximum amount of maple flavor. This blend puts to shame any other so-called maple-flavored aromatic I've tried over the years. If you enjoy the occasional aromatic blend but are fussy about quality, this is one to add to the list.

Barclay Mixture

Serad: Overused but true here: This is a mellow blend. A chunky mix of square-cut Burley and Virginia, and while this is unflavored and as close to a natural American as you can get, I think that it is a bit cased. Packing is easy, almost gravity feed, and it is a one-match light. This is full of real tobacco flavors, simple and unaffected, mostly deep but some lighter and sweet. Barclay is so cool, puffing is almost as if it is not lit. The Virginias eliminate any hint of the Burley drawbacks: bitterness, bad ending. I am really fond of this kind of thing, and I would recommend it highly as an all-day smoke.

Gage: A simple Burley and Virginia mixture, Barclay is a smooth smoke with muted flavor. Although an excellent choice for those who fancy uncomplicated blends, it offered nothing that would make me come back for seconds. However, the base tobaccos are excellent, and the combination of cube-cut Burley and ribbons of Virginia and Burley in varying sizes makes this unusually easy to keep lit.

Nut Brown Burley

Serad: If you know Wilke, you know Nut Brown Burley. If you don't know Wilke, this is a great place to start. Aged cube-cut Burley, my sample was actually more rubbed out and had some short ribbon in it. Nonetheless, this is an absolute classic. It is like nothing else around, better to me than even Edgeworth Flake, the highest example of its genre. Round, full, glacially cool, no bite, no bitterness, and the most flavorful and completely placid smoke imaginable. Also no sweeteners, no condimental leaf, and too plain for some folks, but to me, Nut Brown is too wonderful. Highly recommended and never tiresome.

Gage: Despite my praise for the Burley used in Pipeworks' mixtures, this blend reaffirms my belief that in most cases, Burley should be part of the pipe tobacco orchestra and not a soloist. The uniformly medium-brown blend combines ribbon, rough flake and small cube cut. It burns evenly from start to finish. While it's definitely a good choice for a Burley fanatic, it doesn't offer the Burley taste experience of, say, Orlik's Dark Strong Kentucky.

Wilke No. 10

Serad: I would class this as a very light Balkan, the lightest I have had that I would still call a Balkan, in fact. I am aware that there is a lack of common understanding and agreement of blending nomenclature, but a Balkan to me features the Oriental components of a blend and has a characteristic bitterness to the taste and pungency to the room note. No. 10 is graced with Smyrna, Davalla, Xanthi and Shiraz, with the usual Virginia (lemon, in this case) and Latakia. It is probably the only Balkan I would think of with all-day potential since it never overwhelms. It has that complex note of bitterness and exotic leaf, but it settles into a less complex taste mid-bowl to the end. Very nice and recommended.

Gage: The rich pouch aroma is of the classic Latakia-rich English blend, and the taste delivers what you'd expect. The mixture incorporates varying cuts of Oriental tobaccos such as Smyrna and Xanthi, complemented by some bright Virginia and a fairly heavy dose of Latakia. This visually appealing mixture delivered particularly interesting lemony high notes because of the liberal use of bright Virginia. The flue-cured Virginia leaf caused this mixture to burn a little hotter than many English blends, yet well within an acceptable level if smoked carefully. Oddly enough, this lemony overtone inspired me to try the mixture with a crisp, cool glass of Chardonnay. While white wine is usually not a good partner with an English mixture, it was an appealing combination with this bright and cheerful blend. ▶

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Wilke No. 13
Serad: Tennessee Burley, Syrian Latakia, Perique, Virginia and Royal Scott (showing how companionable that component can be)—this is a very nice, middle-of-the-road blend. This also doesn't seem very Syrian to me, and I would say that it is clearly dominated by the Latakia component and the pouch aroma is very smoky. The leaf is visually appealing and of many colors. The aromatic qualities of Royal Scott are not much in evidence, and I would have liked them to be. Very cool and pleasant, though, and the pipe remains clean.

Gage: This mixture combines everything but the kitchen sink. Although I don't doubt it is a venerable and popular blend, the combination of Burley, Latakia, Perique, Virginias and the aromatic Royal Scott was a bit overwhelming. There was so much going on in this blend that it muddled all the flavors, creating a somber smoke that lacked complexity or interest.

Wilke No. 72
Serad: No. 72 is a round, well-balanced, classically American-style blend. It is Burley, two cuts of Virginia, Latakia, Perique and Royal Standard (like Royal Scott, another Wilke product, but strangely missing from their catalog now). This is Burley at the match and Burley predominates throughout, but in a very pleasant way. There is absolutely no bite or bitterness, and it has a wonderful aroma to me. Recommended.

Rumcake
Gage: If I had a dollar for every rum-flavored blend ever created, including those by home blenders armed with a Burley mix and a bottle of rum (yo ho ho), I could retire. Most rum-flavored mixtures are taste disappointments, but Pipeworks' Rumcake delivers a smooth buttery taste without bitterness or undue heat. The rum aroma predominates in the pouch. When lit, it comes through in the taste but not in an overpowering way. Solid base tobaccos of bright North Carolina ribbon and Wilke's very fine Black Cavendish combine for a winning marriage. It will smoke hot, so be careful. It burns clean and even with nary a plug or dottle. The room aroma was judged by others to be pleasing and inoffensive, with a hint of cinnamon and vanilla custard. It didn't leave a lingering smell or taste even in a briar bowl. Rumcake is a fine choice when you're inclined to enjoy an easygoing smoke in the company of others.

Wilke No. 78
Serad: This is a richly full blend and very appealing on a number of fronts. The leaf is of medium cut, tending toward the short, and of many shades of brown to black. After a sniff of the pouch, you will be hooked. Latakia, Perique, Burley and Virginias are wonderfully balanced into a brilliant blend that never becomes tiresome. A bit heavy for all-day puffing, I think, this is a blend of the sort that makes pipe smokers of those who formerly favored tubular use of the leaf because of its wonderful richness. Cool and sensually engaging, this is highly recommended to those looking for a classic American blend.

Wilke No. 191 (Honey-vanilla)
Serad: This is Wilke's best-selling blend, and for good reason. Unlike most of those gelatinous black vanillas on the market, this is black Cavendish with Burley and Virginia, giving it significant body and a silky draw. Natural honey and vanilla are added, a mixture in other blends close to napalm, but here just sweet, fragrant and delicious. It reminds me of the first black Cavendish-based blends I tried before they started taking over the market 25 years ago. There is a singular flavor of excellent leaf under the sweetness and flavorings that has gone by the wayside in many similar products found today. If you like aromatics you will love this. This may very well be tied for first place with Mac Baren's Vanilla Cream for first in class. Highly recommended.

Gage: In the pouch, this blend, which incorporates natural flavoring from honey and vanilla beans, has a cloying molasses scent. However, when smoked, you do indeed taste a light resonance of both flavoring ingredients. Once again, Wilke's light touch in using these potentially overwhelming ingredients makes this an appealing aromatic. I liked the shaggy cut of Black Cavendish combined with finer ribbons of Virginia and matured Burley. Once again, these fine base tobaccos are enhanced, not overwhelmed, by the natural flavorings. Another fine aromatic choice.

Wilke No. 196
Serad: A very simple blend—and simplicity has its merits to me—196 consists of toasted black Cavendish and natural Virginias. There are many blends like this, but the superiority of the leaf makes this noteworthy. It packs well, but took a few lights every time to get going regardless of the pipe. This may have had to do with the moisture level, and drying might have helped. The flavor is uncomplicated, with the Cavendish sweetness enveloping the Virginia tobacco-y sweetness to great effect. All in all, this one could go the distance, and the aroma produces no complaints. Recommended.

Gage: One of the shop's original blends, created for a particular customer, No. 196 is a simple mixture with very light caramel overtones. Clean-burning and very smooth, the blend doesn't knock your socks off but is subtly appealing. A fine choice for someone who enjoys aromatic mixtures.

Churchill
Gage: Cigar leaf tobacco blends are extremely difficult to get right, usually lost in the hazy netherworld between a good cigar and a good pipe tobacco. The best cigar leaf blends are those that coax an interesting flavor from the right cigar leaf without tasting at all like a cigar. Churchill is such a blend. You can see the chunky cigar leaf in the mixture, along with a modest amount of Latakia and a lot of Burley. I would guess the cigar leaf used is a very mild natural wrapper leaf, which is the most delicate-tasting of all cigar tobaccos. It's almost as if the cigar leaf takes the place of the more traditional Turkish leaf, although it's far less pungent than Turkish. The use of Burley may be the key to why this cigar-leaf blend works. Perhaps it counterbalances the cigar taste that doesn't seem to work well in a pipe. This mixture is pretty hearty and is more enjoyable after a meal, rather than on an empty stomach. *P&T*

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PIPE EVENTS

CORPS Pipe Smokers' Exposition and Celebration
The Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers will host its 21st Annual Pipe Smokers' Exposition and Celebration from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2 at the Holiday Inn Select-Koger South Conference Center, 10800 Midlothian Turnpike, Richmond, Va. Call the hotel at 804.379.3800 and mention CORPS for special room rates. For more information, contact CORPS at P.O. Box 34023, Richmond, VA 23234; 804.342.0761; *conclave@corpipesmokers.org*.

Gateway Area Pipe Show
The St. Louis Pipe Club will present the 18th Annual Gateway Area Pipe Show on Feb. 11, 2006, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Hilton St. Louis Airport, 10330 Natural Bridge Rd., St. Louis, MO 63134. Call the hotel at 800.445.8667 and mention the show for special room rates. There will be an open house on Friday, Feb. 10. For more information, contact Jay Milton at 618.288.2090 or Bob Callaway at 636.946.8555.

Kansas City Pipe & Tobacco Show
The Greater Kansas City Pipe Club will host its Eighth Annual Kansas City Pipe & Tobacco Show at the KCI Expo Center Oct. 29-30. For more information, visit the club's Web site at *www.GKCPipeClub.com*.

New York Pipe Shows
The First Annual Pipe Spectacular will be held on Saturday, Dec. 3, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Ramada Hotel Newark International Airport will host each event. Special room rates are available by contacting the Ramada at 800.223.8285.

Northern California Pipe Show
The Sacramento Pipe Collectors' Assembly, the Fresno Pipe Club and the Peninsula Pipe Club will host the Eighth Annual Northern California Pipe Show on Saturday, Nov. 12, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the training room of the Clarklift Team Power Forklift dealership at 8111 Fruitridge Road, Sacramento, Calif. Admission is free. Contact Gary Malmberg, 916.442.6027; *gmalmberg@earthlink.net*; Web site: *www.secondhandsmokes.com/ncps.html*.

We regret that, due to space limitations, we are unable to include information on every club we've heard from. For a complete listing of those submitted, please refer to our Web site, *www.pt-magazine.com*.

PIPE CLUBS

Arrowhead Pipe Club
Contact Dan Spaniola, Arrowhead Pipe Club, c/o Paul's Pipe Shop, 647 S. Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48502.

Atlanta Pipe Club
Second Saturday of every month at 2 p.m. at Royal Cigar Co., 2179 Briarcliff Road, Atlanta, Ga., on the corner of Briarcliff and LaVista roads. Contact Joyce White at 404.329.0088 or Ricks Carson at *rcarson@paceacademy.org* or John Offerdahl at *jkofferdahl@charter.net*.

Austin Pipe Enthusiast Society (APES)
Second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in the Havana Lounge at Heroes and Legacies, 10000 Research Blvd., Ste. 214, Austin, Texas. Contact Jerry Franks at 512.626.9233 or *jqfranks@hotmail.com*.

Briars Club
Second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. Location is subject to change. For meeting or club information, contact Howard Gutenstein at 845.433.3598 or *briarsclub2001@yahoo.com*.

Briars Club of Rome
Meets every Wednesday. All members receive 25 percent off all pipe accessories and tobaccos at Old Havana Cigar Co. in Rome, Ga. Contact Steven McDowell Jr. at 706.295.0546 or *oldhavana@bellsouth.net*.

Briar Squires Pipe Club
Second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Hops Grill and Bar, 9826 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville, Fla. Contact Briar Squires, P.O. Box 61446, Jacksonville, FL 32236; Cy Jones at 904.739.8190; or Clif Byrd at *crbyrd@bellsouth.net*.

Burlington Pipe Club
First Thursday of the month at The Black Bull, 1124 Guelph Line, Burlington, Ontario. Contact Phil Raney at 519.754.1148.

Central Florida Pipe Club
Last Thursday of the month at The Tobacco Merchant in Jacobsen's Plaza in Longwood, Fla., from 6 to 9 p.m. Contact Don Hockman Jr. at 407.647.3200 or *orlandopipe@yahoo.com*.

Central Oklahoma Pipe Enthusiasts (COPE)
Second Thursday of the month at the Royal Bavaria Brauhaus & Restaurant, 3401 S. Sooner Road, Moore, Okla. Contact COPE, P.O. Box 7034, Moore, OK 73153; or *jhaldeman@bix.com*.

Chesapeake Pipe Club
Second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Johnny Dee's Lounge, 1705 Amuskai Rd., Baltimore, MD 21234. Call Bill Maitz, 410.825.8940.

Chicagoland Pipe Collectors Club (CPCC)
Every month on a Saturday night, except in May, July and December, at the Secret Garden Restaurant, 1612 Rand Road, Arlington Heights, Ill., 847.670.5502. Visit *www.chicagopipeshow.com*, or contact Mike Reschke at 630.889.0453 or *mwreschke@ameritech.net*.

Christopher Morley Pipe Club of Philadelphia
Third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Engine 46 Steak House, 10 Reed St., Philadelphia, Pa. Contact Bob Page at 215.732.7235; 215.567.2972; or *rpage@classicalguitarstore.com*.

Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers (CORPS)
Third Tuesday of the month at various Richmond, Va.-area restaurants and pubs. Contact CORPS for the location of the next meeting at 804.342.0761; *onclave@corpipesmokers.org*; *www.corpipesmokers.org*.

Confrere of Indiana Briar Friars
Contact Stephen Williams at 765.282.0229.

Connecticut Area Pipe Society (CTAPS)
New club seeking members. Contact Rick Olszewski at CT Area Pipe Society, 84 D'Amato Lane, Bristol, CT 06010; phone: 860.983.3018; *www.ctaps.org*; or *membership@ctaps.org*.

Croft's Burley Burners
First Saturday of the month at Croft's Pipe & Tobacco Shop, 4722 Richmond Ave., Houston, TX 77027. Call 713.850.8091 for more information.

Fresno Pipe Club
Third Sunday of the month at 6 p.m. at Hardwick's Briar Shoppe. Contact Douglas A. Pitts at Hardwick's Briar Shoppe, Manchester Center, 3402 N. Blackstone, Suite 124, Fresno, CA 93726; 209.228.1389; *dpitts@gte.net*.

Great Northern Pipe Club
Third Sunday of the month at 1:30 p.m., usually at the Maplewood Lanes, Lower Level, 1955 English Street, Maplewood, MN. Contact Tony Espeseth at 715.595.4666 or check out *www.greatnorthernpipeclub.org*.

Greater Columbus Pipe and Ale (GCPA)
The GCPA is a new pipe club in the Columbus, Ohio area. Contact the GCPA at 168 Boyd Drive, Columbus, OH 43085; *GCPAinfo@lycos.com*.

Greater Kansas City Pipe Club
Third Thursday of the month at Cigar & Tabac, 103 Metcalf Center in Overland Park, Kan., at 8 p.m. Call Mike Sull at 913.362.7864 or e-mail the club at *www.GKCPipeClub.com*.

Harbor Pipe and Cigar Club
Every Wednesday night at 7 p.m. at Captain Hunt Tobacconist in San Diego, Calif. Contact either Neil Hunt or Courtney Hunt at 619.232.2938; e-mail *huntobacco@yahoo.com*.

Honorable Society of Pipe Smokers
Second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Mike's Place in the Warwick Village Shopping Center in Newport News, Va. Contact Tom Clason at 757.867.9040; Dwight Davis at 757.588.7680 or Rick Patton at *pttnrchrd@aol.com*.

Hudson Valley Pipe Club
First Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. at various locations in the Hudson Valley. Contact Rob Denholtz at 845.462.2495; or *den@ulster.net*. ▶

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Israel Pipe Club
Second Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. on the second floor of the Yotveta restaurant in the Azrieli mall in Tel Aviv. Contact Mark Kotliar at 972.544.212907 or visit *www.pipeclub.org.il.*

Knoxville Area Pipe Smokers (KAPS)
Third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Contact *www.knoxpipesmokers.org*; or Randy Pedigo at 865.637.7565 or *repedigo@bellsouth.net.*

Memphis Area Puffers Society (MAPS)
Third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m., upstairs at the Sports Pub, 5012 Park Ave (Park & Mendanhall), Memphis, Tenn. Contact Bob at *info@pipeclub.org*; *www.pipeclub.org.*

Milwaukee Area Pipe Society
Meets at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at Jack's Tobacco and M.C.S., 13640 W. Capitol Drive, Brookfield, Wis. Inquiries can be directed to *info@milwaukeeareapipesociety.com*, or visit the Web site at *www.milwaukeeareapipesociety.com.*

Mt. Town Society of Kapnismologists
First and third Thursday of every month at 8 p.m. at Smokers Club, 100 S. Mission St., Ste. C, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858. Contact Dave at 989.775.8536 or *mandogart@hotmail.com.*

Nashville Area Pipe Smokers (NAPS)
Second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Sherlock Holmes Pub located at 2206 Elliston Place, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Chuck Horvath at 615.790.9582 or *chuck.horvath@us.army.mil.*

New York Pipe Club
First and third Tuesdays of the month. For times and locations, visit *www.newyorkpipeclub.com.*

Nordic Smokers' Guild
Contact President Leif Slot, Florsgade 7, 3 th, DK-2200 Copenhagen N, Denmark; *ls@n-t.dk.*

North Georgia Pipe Club
Third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at Smitty's Tobacco, 975 Dawsonville Hwy., Gainesville, Ga. Contact Clark Smith at 770.539.9006 or *wcsmith1@bellsouth.net.*

North Oakland Tobacco and Pipe Club (NOTPC)
First Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. at The Commonwealth Club, 30088 Dequindre Road, Warren, MI 48092. Contact Terry McGinty at 248.471.0195 or *tmcginty@ameritech.net.*

Northeast Arkansas Pipe Puffers
Second Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. and the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Tobacco Plus Store in the Midway Plaza in Highland, Ark. Contact Dick Alexander, c/o Tobacco Plus-Midway Plaza, 1998 Highway 62/412, Hardy, AR 72542; 870.856.4100 or 870.856.4433.

Northeast Wisconsin Tobacco Society (NEWTS)
Third Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Titletown Brewing Co. Contact Todd R. Jerabek at *tjerabek@frontiernet.net.*

Old Pueblo Pipe Club
Third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at local shops in Tucson, Ariz. Check the schedule on the club Web site, *www.jack-tompkins.com/OPPC*, or contact Jack Tompkins at 520.459.4317 or *Tompkins_jl@cox.net.*

Pipe Club de France
Contact President Alain Letulier, 38 rue du Chevalier de la Barre, F59175 Templemars, France; *alainletulier@compuserve.com.*

Pipe Club of Norfolk (U.K.)
Meets at the Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich, on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Visit *www.pipeclubofnorfolk.co.uk.*

Pipe Club of Taiwan
Contact Ben Chen, P.O. Box 83-53, Taipei 111, Taiwan; *hanworld@ ms29.hinet.net.*

Pocono Inter-Mountain Pipe Enclave (PIPE)
Every Tuesday night at El Humidor in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., from 6 to 9 p.m. Contact David Bull at 570.894.8016 or *debull@starband.net.*

Sacramento Pipe Collector's Assembly (SPCA)
Twice monthly on the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. and last Sunday of the month at 1 p.m. in downtown Sacramento, Calif., at 1325 O Street #1. Contact Gary Malmberg, 916.442.6027; *gmalmberg@earthlinknet.*

Sandwich Isle Pipe Society
Last Wednesday of the month from 6 to 9 p.m. at South Pacific Pipes & Cigars, 350 Ward Ave., Suite 106, Honolulu, HI 96814. Contact Dale James Neff at 808.591.8275.

Seattle Pipe Club
Second Thursday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Rainier Club, 820 Fourth Ave., Seattle WA 98104. Contact Matt Guss at 253.627.4268 or *matt@reallysmart.com*; Al Ford at *alferd.ford@verizon.net*; or visit *www.seattlepipeclub.org.*

Shanghai Pipe Club
Meets every other Saturday afternoon from 2 to 6 p.m. at 498-43 North Wulumuqi Road, Shanghai. Visit the club's Web site at *www.shanghaipipeclub.com* or contact Echo Hui at *echo_hui@yahoo.com.*

Sherlock Holmes Pipe Club of Boston
First Tuesday of the month in Stoughton, Mass. Contact Nelson Pidgeon at *shpcboston@yahoo.com* or Don Powers at 781.449.0380; or visit the club Web site at *www.shpcboston.org.*

Singapore Pipe Club
Meets on Sundays at Starbucks, Liat Towers, Orchard Road, whenever Dr. Loh is in town. *mike@drmikeloh.com.*

Smokers on the Square
Meets the first Thursday of every month at 8 p.m. at Marietta Cigar Co. at 16 Atlanta Street, Marietta, GA 30060; and the third Wednesday of every month at MacCracken's Pub across the street from Marietta Cigar Co. at 7 p.m. Contact Matt Steffney at 770.314.3204 or *tendjekan@yahoo.com.*

Spa City Pipe Dreamers
First Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m. at Central Ave. Cigar World. Contact David Zembo at 338 Quail Creek Road, Hot Springs, AR 71901; 501.624.6340; *dandpzembo@cablelynx.com.*

South Hampton Roads Pipesmokers' Club
First Monday of the month at 7 p.m. at the White Horse Pub in Pembroke Mall, Virginia Beach, Va. Contact Steve Morrisette at 757.288.8849 or *e-celt@yahoo.com.*

South Jersey Pipe and Cigar Club
Second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Your Coffee and Cigar Box, 703 Tilton Road, Northfield, NJ 08225. Call 609.645.3345.

St. Louis Pipe Club
Second Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. at John Dengler Tobacconist, 700 S. Main, St. Charles, Mo. Contact Jay Milton at 618.288.2090 or Bob Calloway at 636.946.8555.

Triangle Area Pipe Smokers (TAPS)
Second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Duffy's Restaurant & Tavern, 8021 Falls of Neuse Road, Raleigh, N.C. Contact Jim Carrino at 919.848.0685, Stan Sokolove at *pipechief@msn.com*, or visit the Web site at *www.ncneighbors.com/1416.*

Tri-State Pipe and Tobacco Club
For information about meetings of the Fort Wayne, Ind.-based club, contact Dennis Nichols at 260.744.4797.

Twin Ports Pipe Club
First and third Wednesdays at 8 p.m., at 1828 London Road, Duluth, MN 55812. For more information, call Rory Litwin at 218.724.2435 or visit *dangpow.com/~rory/tppc/.*

United Pipe Clubs of America
An organization representing U.S. pipe clubs for national and international smoking competitions and sharing the pipe-smoking experience around the world. Visit *www.unitedpipeclubs.org* or *pipes@unitedpipeclubs.org.*

Vancouver Pipe Club
Second Tuesday of the month after 5 p.m. at City Cigar Co. Contact Doug at *etype@telus.net* or Bas at *basil_stevens@telus.net*; or visit *www.vancouverpipeclub.com.*

Waco Pipe Club
Last Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Texas Sports Hall of Fame Museum, 1108 S. University Parks Dr. in Waco, TX. Contact Steve Fallon at 254.754.3258.

Washington Area Pipe Smokers
Third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at The Smoke Shop, 940 W. Chestnut Street, Washington, Pa. Contact Paula J. Fenelon at The Smoke Shop, 724.228.3266.

"Imagine Winning An Ardor Venere Due Punti (2-Dot)"

(VF2P15)

(VF2P03)

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" The Why I Love My Ardor Pipe Contest"

We would like to thank all of our loyal Ardor Pipe fans that have said that their Ardors are the best smoking pipes in their collection. It is this dedication that has made Ardor Pipe one of the most desired pipes in the world. The tremendous growth and huge demand of Ardor Pipes is due to your passion to acquire these incredible and completely handmade briar pipes. We appreciate your fine support and Master Pipe Artisans - Dorelio and Damiano Rovera pledge to always craft the best pipes possible.

Contest Rules: State why you love your Ardor Pipe in 150 words or less and mail to the address below. Include your favorite Ardor model, your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address if you have one. You must be at least 21 years of age and all entries must be received by November 30, 2005. Winning entries will be determined by December 23, 2005.

Grand Prize: A "Limited Edition" Ardor Venere Due Punti (2-Dot) Pipe. The winner's name will be stamped on the pipe. (Retail Value: $950.00)

Additional Prizes: Five (5) "Very Special" Ardor Pipes will be awarded to those entries that place second through sixth.

Note: Above pipes are currently available.

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